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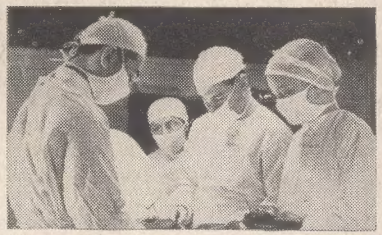

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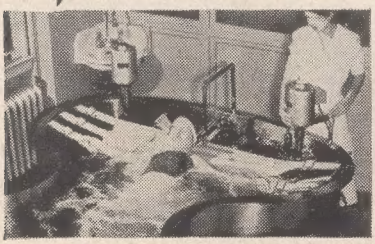

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Cover painted for Adventure by Peter Stevens

Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor

Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

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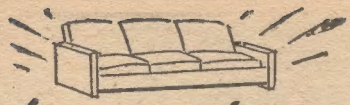

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I would like to contact Jerry Gilmore, whom I lost track of about two years ago. He and I both worked at Stockton, California. He lived on the West Coast around Point Arena. Write Earle Donald Fowler, 421 B Street, Hayward, California.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone knowing the whereabouts of T/5 Reinder Kars. Last address, Service Co. 309th Infantry Regt., serial no. 36450114. Previously attached to tank destroyer outfit Camp Hood, Texas. Write Edward Morris, 119 N. Kenilworth Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois.

I am anxious to hear from Pete Burkoski. He was at one time (about 1939) a trainer and handler of elephants for Barnum and Bailey's Circus. About 40 years old, 5' 6" tall, husky build. Last heard from in 1941, when he was a patient in a Staten Island Hospital (New York). Write Charles J. Koerner, 10 Castle Creek Road, Binghamton, RD 4, N. Y.

Will any former member of the Adventure Pen Club please write Frank G. Babylon, 2055 Dartmore St., Pittsburgh 10, Penna.

I am trying to find my father, Noble H. McGinnis. When last heard of he was operating a funeral home somewhere in Okla. Pvt. Wm. H. McGinnis, RA 26964691, 111th Engr. Supply Co. Apo 942 c/o PM, Seattle, Washington.

Will anyone knowing George W. Spiegelberg, please ask him to get in touch with me? I think his home is in New York City. Carlos M. Diaz, M. Calle 29th, No. 1809, Chihuahua, Chih, Mexico.

Veterans who served at Dutch Harbor are planning a reunion in Chicago in 1950. We are eager to hear from Naval and Marine personnel who served at N.O.B., N.A.S., and N.A.F. from 1941 to the fall of 1945. Write J. Matthews, 5321 North Ashland, Chicago 40, Ill.

(Continued on page 91*)*

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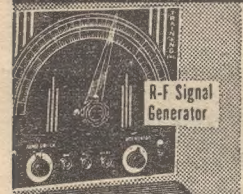

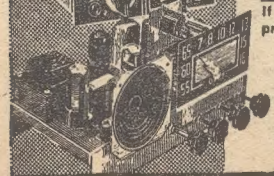

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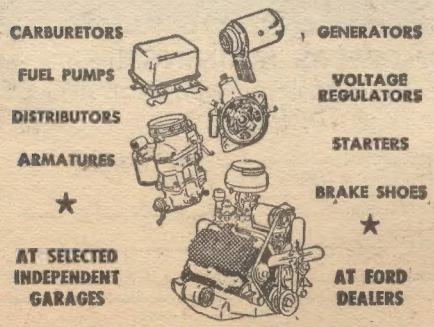

FORD Division of FORD MOTOR COMPANY

(Continued from page 6)

Would appreciate hearing from anyone knowing the whereabouts of Walter Coppinger, stationed in Panama around the time of the first World War. He was discharged from the Army at Fort Benning, Georgia. Please notify James Corrigan, 1225 Bloomfield Street, Hoboken, N. J.

Sister and nephew of Melvin P. Verschneider would like to hear from anyone knowing his present address. He has not been heard from in five years. He is 53 years old, an expert auto mechanic and his last known address was 21 Evergreen St., Cortland, N. Y. Send information to nephew, Harry Farrar, c/o D. Pitale, 32 So. Conn. Ave., Atlantic City, N. J.

Would like information of Army buddies' whereabouts: John Kowal, Hamtramck, Mich.; Harry Gottfriedd, Chicago; John Tyson, N. Y. C. All of the 31st MRC (ETO) last seen in Chantilly. Also Emil de Roseby, 29th Inf. Div., last seen near Frankfurt A/M. Please write to John F. Laughlin, 4719 N. Cicero Ave., Chicago 30, Ill.

Would like information concerning whereabouts of Floyd (Bud) Riggs. Ex-sailor and race car jockey. Lived at Wilmar and Los Angeles, California. We were shipmates on USS *Leonis* in South Pacific '43 and '44. Maybe shipping Merchant Marine or tending bar around California coast. Send any information to Richard Powell, Cpl., USA, Alaskan Communication System, Box 219, Anchorage, Alaska.

I am trying to locate a friend and Army buddy, Hovey Murphy. Anyone knowing his address would do a great favor by writing Tony T. Perkins, Route No. 8, Box 626, Salem, Oregon.

Would appreciate hearing from or about:—Leo Corns, last heard from in Indianapolis, Ind. 1944, believed in Chicago.—Lt. Wm. Gable, USAAF, 1944, home was in Jay County, Ind.—Pvt. Jas. Martin, last heard from at Wakeman Gen. Hosp., Camp Atterbury, Ind. 1945, home in vicinity of Cincinnati, O., decorator by trade.—George J. Snyder, last address 1122 E. Main Street, Clarksburg, W. Va. 1942—Roscoe Shirley, discharged from Army at Camp Atterbury, Ind. 1944, home vicinity of Grafton, W. Va. Write to George E. Ziegler, R.R. No. 2—Box No. 178 Spencer, Indiana.

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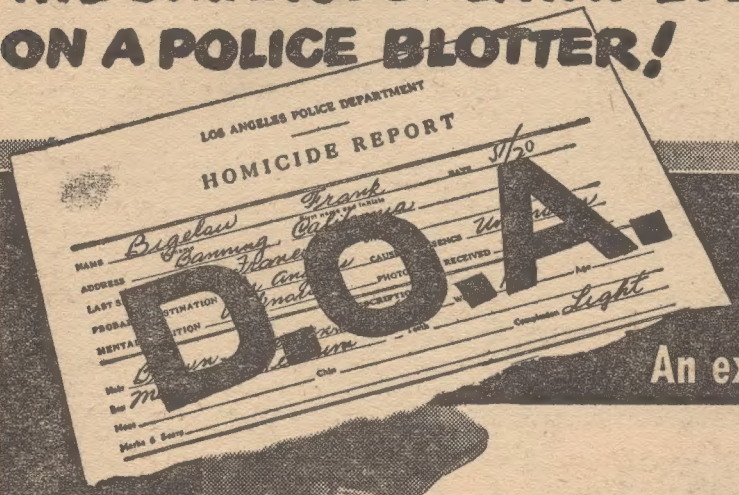

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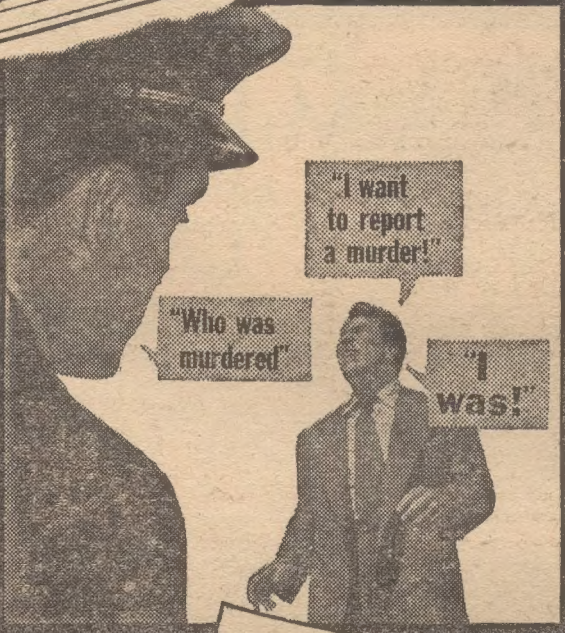

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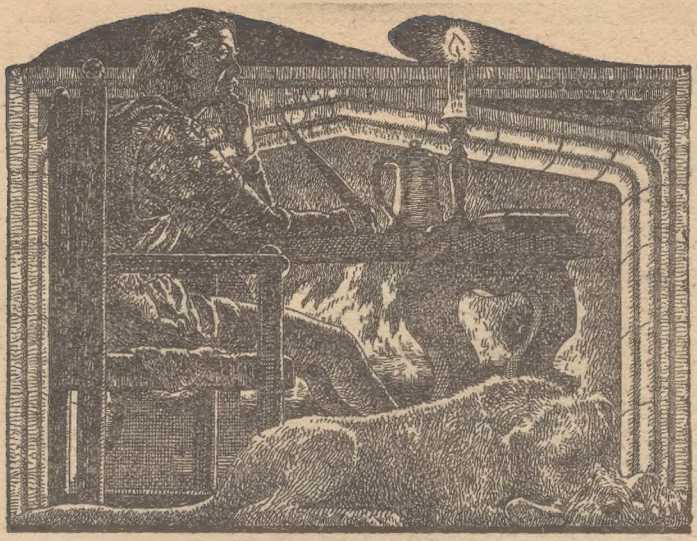

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

AROUND the year 1160 A.D. or a few years later—there is some disagreement as to the exact date—a son was born to a certain Mongol chief, who called the boy Temujin. The birth went unheralded and unnoticed in either the Christian or the Mohammedan world. Yet Temujin was destined to become one of the most ruthless military geniuses ever to bloody the pages of history; his conquests were to change the face of half the known world; and at his death he would rule unchallenged over a vast empire extending from the Pacific Ocean to the Caspian Sea.

At the age of 13, already grown to man's stature and bold leadership, Temujin succeeded his father as tribal chief. By the year 1206, he had been proclaimed Khan of all the Mongols; in 1213 he invaded northern China; in 1218 he subdued Korea—but these were mere preliminaries to wider conquests to come, in the west. From 1218 to 1222 he overcame Khiva, conquered and ravaged northern India, overran Turkestan, Iran, Iraq and part of Russia. And the trail of his plundering armies was marked by ruined cities and piles of corpses. He was the forerunner and model for the ruthless dictators of later centuries, who faithfully copied his methods of espionage, propaganda, deliberate terrorization (Hitler called that *schrecklicheit),* and the merciless slaughter of all who resisted his raiding warriors . . . And even today his name resounds like the thundering hoofbeats of his Mongol Horde . . . *Genghis Khan!* You will meet the great Khan in Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's powerful novelette which leads off this issue.

Major Wheeler-Nicholson has been too long absent from these pages. To the older readers of *Adventure,* who remember the colorful stories he wrote for this magazine some years back, his name will be a familiar and welcome one. Now he reintroduces himself to you and brings us up-to-date on his recent activities—

This is a word of greeting from an old *Adventure* writer who has not appeared in these pages for many years. In those years I have discovered that *Adventure* readers have long memories. I am continually running into *Adventure* fans in the most unexpected places. A taxi driver in London

(Continued on page 122)

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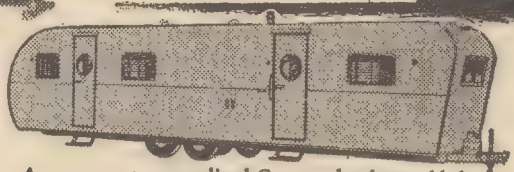

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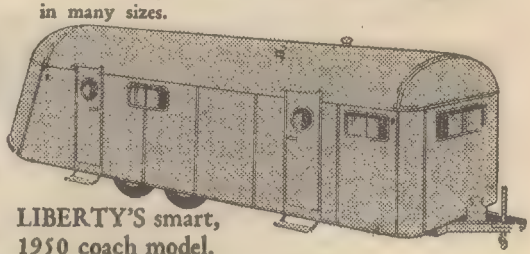

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THE WRATH OF GENGHIS KHAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
V. E. PYLES

They shouted a strange battle cry, and were suddenly among the milling Kurds, their long blades slashing through Moslem leather and steel.

A Tale of the Mongol Horde

THE vulture floated on lazy wings, abiding his time. Far beneath him, on the desert's dusty face, there moved a small group of horsemen with a pack train of mules. Farther out, keeping carefully concealed by the black sand dunes of this Turkestan desert, moved a large group of horsemen, some two score Kurds. The Kurds, as avid for loot in this year 1219 A.D. as they are today, were also biding their time, seeking the best time and place to swoop in and seize that pack train.

Although they outnumbered their intended prey by five to one, the Kurds were slightly puzzled as to what those

By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

travellers might be. There were only nine horsemen, hooded and cloaked in Moslem *khalats* against the northern desert chill. They carried tall, slender lances which merchants might well do, but unlike the straggling march of merchants, these strangers kept closed up, in strict column, with something of military precision about them.

The Kurds would have been considerably more puzzled had they heard the speech of these strangers. For they spoke a mixture of English and Norman-French, of the sort used by the infidel *Nasrani*, the Nazarene or Christian warriors of the Holy Land.

One of them called to the tall young man who led column.

"B'y'r honor's leave, Sieur Alan, the men is askin' how long it will be now afore they lay eyes on Genghis Khan?" It was the voice of Diccon, the senior sergeant-at-arms.

The young leader was hawk-faced, resolute. The freshness of the gilding on his spurs, and the newly painted design emblazoned on his shield, betokened fairly recent knighthood. He studied road and sand dunes and distant mountain range toward which they were headed.

"If God and St. Michael are willing... if we don't get jumped by the Kurds before we get out of this desert...and if we succeed in getting through the armies of the Shah Muhammad, laying athwart our path ahead, we should be seeing the Mongol Emperor in another six or seven days!" he said.

IT WAS strange, he reflected, how, as they had travelled eastward through Syria, the name of that Mongol leader had been only a pulsing murmur in men's ears. As they had come through the Persian lands, it had grown more insistent, like the beating of a distant drum. And now that they had arrived on the borders of Turkestan, it was almost as if the chill winds that blew down from the mountain ramparts ahead carried faint and far, the murmur of a vast multitude of warriors, the high, shrill, neighing of innumerable horses, and the muffled thunder of the hoofbeats of the Horde of Genghis Khan.

It was a sound that struck dread in the soul of Islam, all the way from far Cairo on the Nile, to the Shah's great cities of Bokhara and Samarkand, two days march ahead.

The Shah had reason to dread Genghis Khan. For the Shah's officials had killed and robbed the Mongol merchants of that ruler. When the Mongol leader had protested, the Shah had killed the chief of the envoys and burned off the beards of the rest. Genghis Khan, in High Asia, had brooded, and at last had sent an ominous message:

"Thou hast chosen war. That will happen which will happen, and what it is to be, we know not. God alone knows."

The wrath of Genghis Khan had been aroused. There was dread throughout the Shah's domains.

But there was no dread of the Mongol conqueror in the hearts of this small group led by the Sieur Alan de Beauchamp. They sought out, as their distant goal, the *ordu*, the great headquarters tent, of Genghis Khan himself.

Their young leader, seeing the lengthening of their shadows cast by the westering sun, was seeking safe halting place for the night.

"It should be about here, Ghulam!" Alan turned in the saddle, calling to the Persian servant who had travelled westward on this route with him before.

The Persian rode forward, shading his eyes with his hand. As they rounded a high sand dune, they both saw it at the same time, the ancient desert watchtower, with its stout walled courtyard below and the spring of sweet water and the green grass around it. The sergeants-at-arms stared hopefully at it, being tired and hungry.

Alan saw something else as well, a flash of sun on steel.

"'Ware Kurds!" his voice rang out suddenly. *"Démontez! Arbalètes aux mains!"* Dismount! Cross-bows to hand!

The wave of Kurdish horsemen, *yataghans* gleaming in the sun, their small round painted shields before them, their lean, eager wolf-like faces, avid-eyed on the pack train, were astonished at the sudden change in the group they galloped down upon.

For the strangers swiftly cast aside

their heavy woolen cloaks, revealing dark, oiled, chain-mail beneath, stouter and stronger if less beautifully made than that of Islam.

They were off their horses, cross-bows in hand, heavier weapons than anything the Kurds had ever seen. The nomad horsemen came on, counting on the slow winding of the cross-bows to give them time. But these strange, fair-skinned and blue-eyed men, set their bows instantly, with goat's-foot levers. There came the *twang* of many cords released, the hissing of iron quarrels through the air and the sudden thudding of the deadly missiles into man and beast. The rapidity of their fire was such that their cross-bows erupted death in a continuous stream of destruction.

A dozen Kurdish men and horses were down, threshing, saddles were emptying, riderless horses were neighing and dragging their reins.

The pitiless rain of bolts broke the impetus of the Kurdish charge. The surviving nomads checked their horses and turned to flee, when the little group of strangers suddenly mounted again.

They had swords in hand, long deadly weapons, the like of which the Kurds had never beheld. They shouted a strange battle cry, and were suddenly among the milling Kurds, the long blades slashing, the heavy sharp steel shearing through Moslem leather and steel, cutting through Kurdish flesh and bone, emptying saddles, with an occasional head rolling in the sand.

This last was great thewed Thomas Little's work, he taking great pride of workmanship in that sideways sweeping cut. The surviving Kurds fled.

THERE was undoubtedly much weeping in the Kurdish tents that night and awed tales of the ferocity and deadliness of those strangers in the desert.

The sergeants-at-arms finished their task, dismounting to cut the throats of wounded men and animals, searching the bodies of the slain for loot, and making meticulous count of recovered cross-bow quarrels under old Diccon's harsh, all-seeing eye.

The circling vultures were free to settle down on great, silent, wings at last, as the little group entered the courtyard of the watchtower. The cook fire was quickly going and the pleasant scent of broiling mutton on the air.

It was not until horses had been grazed and the evening meal eaten around a cheerful fire against the night chill of the desert, that Diccon, the senior sergeant-at-arms brought up the question.

"Y'r honor ha' been in this place afore?" he asked.

"Aye, Ghulam and I sought shelter here against a sandstorm, when we journeyed from Genghis Khan's court at Karakorum to Jerusalem—nigh eighteen months ago...and Ghulam was very wroth with me in this place!" The young Sieur Alan's eyes crinkled in amusement at the memory.

"And no wonder, lord, laden heavily with great gift of gold from Genghis Khan as we were...to trust every wandering beggar! I sat up all night for fear that your throat would be cut before dawn!" Ghulam was not amused. The sergeants, leaning against their saddles, waited hopefully. The Sieur Alan told the tale.

They became lost in a desert sandstorm, two days out of Bokhara. In the darkness they came upon a stranger, hurt, bleeding, and exhausted. He had told of this tower nearby and directed them as they carried him in.

The firelight had showed him to be a Seljuk Turk, wiry, his small, black beard tinged with gray, his eyes sardonic. He had been waylaid with his companions, by robber Kurds and left for dead. The next day the Turk, rested and refreshed, took his departure. Alan would have given him gold to aid him in returning to Bokhara, but Ghulam who carried the purse, objected and Alan instead gave him a fur-lined cloak and a horse.

"The cloak cost two gold dirhems in Teheran," grumbled Ghulam, "and the horse, twenty pieces of silver...and the fellow departed and we've never seen him since!"

"But I have seen him since," objected the Sieur Alan. "In the fighting in Egypt, outside Damietta..."

Ghulam looked up startled and somewhat reproachful.

"While I was sick," he said, "but you never told me of that, lord! Said he aught of repaying you for the fur-lined cloak and the horse?"

"He said little," Alan was non-committal, and plainly unwilling to talk about the matter.

"I mind me the fightin' outside Damietta," one of the sergeants, Peter Lacknose, broke the silence. "They was a hull slue o' they Saracens come boilin' in. I was servin' them days under the Sieur Godefroi de Castelfort and he was made captive. I never heered hide nor hair of him since...has y'r honor ever heerd what come of him?"

"Yes!" said the Sieur Alan, no longer sleepy looking.

"What happened along wi' him?" pressed Peter Lacknose.

"He came to no good end!" said Alan flatly.

The men listened, hopeful that the story would be told, the night yet being not far advanced and the fire warm.

"There is no time to tell the tale," Alan said, "we have need of sleep, and strength thereby to get through the armies of the Shah. It will not be easy, despite the fact that I am ambassador from the Barons of Jerusalem to Genghis Khan..."

"Say rather because of it," said Ghulam, "the Shah's Seljuk Turk janissaries will be thicker than the fleas on the coat of an Afghan, right in my own village of Karun, where we should arrive the second night hence."

The Sieur Alan gazed reflectively at Ghulam.

"It would be better did you go on ahead," he said at last, "to spy out what dangers may beset our path...also to visit your father and mother perhaps, for a few hours."

Ghulam flashed a grateful look at Sieur Alan.

"But who will tend you, lord?" he asked worried.

"Brian, my brother, who should be learning his full duty as esquire in any case," said Alan, and he looked with mock severity at the laughing-eyed youth, his brother, across the fire.

"So be it, lord, I depart at dawn for Karun," said Ghulam, "on chance that there may be trap set for you there!"

FROM the watchtower in the desert it was a good two days march to the city of Bokhara, with its pleasant gardens, its mosques and minarets, its strong walls and its stout citadel.

In the luxurious quarters of the governor of Bokhara, high in the Drum Tower of that citadel, two men were deep in talk that night. One was the Emir Timur, the governor of Bokhara, by grace of the Shah Muhammad. The governor's face was creased with worry as he talked, low-voiced to the one who sat beside him.

This one was a renegade Christian knight who had risen high in the service of the Shah, being commander of the garrison of Bokhara, and equal in rank to the governor.

His face showed traces of good breeding and had been handsome, though now overlaid with the fat of good living. His eyes were shabby, haggard...the eyes of a man who had sold his soul to the Devil and got no joy of his bargain. He had dropped his former knightly name and was known as Marouk.

The two were discussing the Nasrani ambassador reported on his way. News travels fast in the desert and even the Shah at Samarkand knew of the envoy to Genghis Khan. He had decreed the death of the Nasrani, and commanded Timur, the governor, to see that it was carried out.

The Governor, Timur, was moody at the prospect.

"For it will be my head that will pay if aught goes amiss...I like not tampering with an ambassador to Genghis Khan... he may win victory!"

"You take the matter too seriously, Timur," said Marouk, "the Nasrani ambassador can be done away with secretly, with word that he died of sickness."

Timur was still moody. Marouk grew impatient.

"It is commanded by the Shah," he said, "that it shall be done quietly. Look you, Timur, you have your country house at the village of Karun, through which the Nasrani must pass...do you go there and have invitation awaiting him to feast with you. . . . I will personally arrange matters so that he does not depart alive from the feasting!"

CHAPTER II

TREACHERY IN BOKHARA

IT WAS nearing sunset of the next day that the small clump of Nasrani lances rode through the village of Karun and out the far side.

As they rounded the first turn, Ghulam at last joined them, riding from out the trees.

"There is treachery ahead, lord," he warned, "the Shah has decreed your death...he has deputed the governor of Bokhara for the task . . . you are to be invited to a feast and some means, mayhap poison, used to dispose of you quietly, the Shah wanting it done in secret!"

"I will strive to avoid his hospitality," said Alan quietly, "and what of lodging for the night thereafter?"

"There is the house of our friend, the Shaykh, a half hour ride ahead, offered you, lord."

"You have done well, Ghulam...do you now ride ahead guarding us against any ambush, and seeking tidings, while I enquire into the matter of feasting with this overly hospitable governor!"

Waiting until Ghulam had ridden away, Alan moved out, twitching his shoulders to settle his chain mail in place, donning helmet again and putting on the gauntlets with their palms of soft leather and their outer sides with fine, chain mail sewn upon them.

The men behind him, seeing this, looked to their own battle gear.

The two sergeants sent forward as outguards came back, quietly riding around the turn of the road.

"B'y'r leave, lord Alan, there be a passel o' they Saracens a-ridin' this way—nigh a dozen—" reported Thomas Little, so surnamed because of the bigness of him.

Without looking behind him, Alan waved his hand once to the right and once to the left...there came a creak of leather, clink of metal and thudding of hoofs from behind and the sergeant-at-arms had trotted up to form line while the sumpter muleteers had taken their charges off to a flank parallel but hidden by the trees.

Alan at their head, the line of lances pivoted round the turn of the road like a steel gate. The sight of them slowed down the small group of Seljuk Turk janissaries. But their scimitars were sheathed and there was an unarmed functionary at their head, a Persian with a great hook nose, clad in orange hued turban and cloak-like *khalat* of blue-dyed Kerman wool.

The Persian put up his hand, palm outward, in token of friendship.

"Peace be unto thee, lord!" he called.

"And unto thee, peace!" replied Alan, and shifted his lance from right side, to left, dropping its butt in the small leathern bucket attached to the stirrup, and letting it swing back, held by the leather loop about his elbow . . . which signifies peace, but also leaves the sword arm free, just in case.

"I come in friendship, lord," said the Persian, a personage named Mirza-Gaffar, the ferrash-bashi, the head servant, of Timur's country household, "bearing greetings to thee from my master, his illustrious excellency, the Emir Timur, the most noble governor of his Majesty, the Shah's city of Bokhara. His excellency prays that thou and thy followers will be his guests in his country house, which lies ahead but a short distance on this road."

"I am overcome with gratitude at the beneficence of his excellency!" returned Alan in the polite phrase. Mirza-Gaffar rode forward and turned in beside him... the Seljuk Turks trotted on past on either side and turned about, following in rear. This Alan did not like and kept his eyes alert to the front, watching each turn of the road, rounding at last the one which gave upon the gates of the wall surrounding the governor's country house.

As Alan expected, a solid rank of janissaries were lined up, closing the road ahead. They might have been so placed as an honor guard, but with the janissaries behind and these in front, his group was boxed in, with no place to turn except through the gates. It was a neat trap.

"His excellency does me much honor!" said Alan in Turkish and turned through the gates.

"Hold the gate with your cross-bows until I return," Alan said to his men. To Mirza-Gaffar's astonishment, the grim sergeants-at-arms were suddenly on foot, holding the gates, the knight their leader

had landed on his feet with a clash of chain mail and, sword at side, was striding across the courtyard to the entrance of the governor's hall where even now the strains of music were coming forth and lights were already on against the descending dusk.

Alan gave quick glance at the gate... his men were blocking it, the Turks outside eyeing those grim Nasrani, their deadly crossbows, fingers on triggers, and none daring to precipitate the unloosing of those quarrels. Mirza-Gaffar was halfway between, gazing bewildered from the blocked gateway to Alan.

The music came to sudden pause and the talk and laughter ceased at sight of the tall Nasrani knight in the doorway, the rays of many colored lamps gleaming on his oiled chain mail. He felt the impact of curious eyes concentrated upon him, from behind the tables lining the walls and from the latticed balconies overhead whence murmurs of feminine admiration were floating down.

At the far end, opposite the entrance, there stood a raised divan where sat the host, gleaming in cloth of gold, his guests of honor about him. Alan stood there, serene and inpassive, waiting for the governor to come forward and greet him as was the custom. Timur, the governor, rose at last but Alan's eyes had become fixed upon the man sitting on his left. Alan grew suddenly still, sighting that heavy figure, its dissipated face showing traces of high birth, and the haggard eyes . . .

IT BROUGHT swift pictures forming and dissolving... there came to Alan's memory that sun drenched, dusty roadway in the village outside Damietta in Egypt...the five knights, himself then esquire to the Sieur Renier de Montmirail...all dismounted...the sudden torment of Seljuk Turks boiling all about them...the being disarmed and driven, hands bound behind them, to their knees before the Seljuk officer...the Nubian executioner with his great blade...the Seljuk's quiet question to the knight on the right of the kneeling line: "Wilt thou embrace Islam, and the Word of Mohammad, the True Prophet of God . . . and live?"

There was a moment's silence, so long as it might take a devout man to commend his soul to God.

"Nay," said a calm voice, "I die in the faith of my fathers!" . . . there was the flash of sun on steel...a thud such as of butcher axe on beef, and something hard and round rolled on the earth, with a strangely headless form toppling slowly to earth...there followed the same relentless question and dauntless reply...the thud of steel on flesh and bone, repeated four times.

There was but one knight remaining before Alan's turn should come, the Sieur Godefroi de Castelfort. Alan had closed his own eyes, commending his soul to God and St. Michael. From near at hand he heard the Sieur Godefroi questioned, "Wilt thou embrace Islam...and live?"

Alan had turned startled head, unbelieving...at the reply.

"Aye," a strangled voice gasped, "I would embrace Islam as the true faith... and live!"

A great shame that a man of his own race, and a knight, should so demean himself before these Turks, had risen into choking anger within Alan. The dissipated face beside him, was white with the pallor of fear, as the knight who had broken his oath of knighthood, was aided to rise and had his bonds cut, the sweat of the dread of imminent death still damp upon his forehead.

A shadow fell upon Alan... kneeling, with bent head, his eyes beheld the red leather riding slippers of the Seljuk Turk...he noted the dust upon them and the whorling pattern of the threads with which they were sewn...the stale stench of the unwashed Nubian swordsman above him, drifted to his nostrils. He finished his prayers, head bowed.

"Thou art young to die," said the voice above him, "and as yet only a *shilah-dar*, a shield bearer (an esquire) with no knightly oath to constrain thee . . . embrace Islam, as this knight hath done, and live out thy term of years..."

Shame at the poltroon who had betrayed them all, both those knights who had already died, courageous in their faith, and Alan himself, who was about to die, rose scornfully to his lips.

"What does it profit a man to gain his

paltry life at the cost of his soul!" he had blazed in bitter anger. "What good can Islam have in gaining as convert a craven dog such as that dishonored knight!"

There was cold contempt in his eyes as he stared at the apostate knight, safe among the Moslems.

"Nay, I die in the faith of my fathers!" Alan had said, and bowed his head for the stroke. It was strangely long in coming, he had raised his head at last to the Turk standing above him, and beheld a wiry Seljuk, his small black beard beginning to be tinged with gray, his eyes dark and piercing, their sardonic gleam softened.

"It seems," said the Turk, "that there is a little matter of a fur-lined cloak and a horse between us...the debt is now repaid...take thy life and depart...but do not beg mercy shouldst again fall into my hands."

"Have I begged mercy?" Alan had

"Nay, I die in the faith of my fathers!" Alan had said, and bowed his head for the stroke.

asked in cold anger. While they unbound his wrists, his eyes had fallen again upon that craven knight. The man was gazing at him in hatred, and a trace of fear that one should have survived to bear witness to his own shame.

HIS eyes on that heavy figure on the divan, the figure of the man once known as the Sieur Godefroi de Castelfort, Alan scarce heeded the man coming toward him, noting only golden embroidered silken robe and the flash of an emir's emerald clasp holding white aigrette in place upon the turban.

Alan, as courtesy required, lifted the helm from his head cradling it in his left arm.

"Peace be upon thy house," he said mechanically and then noted sudden halt and intent regard bent upon him.

"So we meet again!" said the wiry Seljuk, fingering that small black beard beginning to be tinged with gray, his eyes dark and piercing but this time, Alan noted swiftly, that there was no peace in those eyes, whatsoever, but palpable devastation and something of being hunted, and Alan figured that this man was driven by some cruel spur of urgency.

"Ahlan wa sahlan wa marhaba!" Welcome and well come and good cheer! the formal Arabic greeting to a guest, came at last from the lips of the Seljuk. But the words were hollow and lacking in fervor. Timur was plainly undergoing some inward struggle. At last he spoke again.

"You will honor me by sitting beside me at the feasting, O Nasrani?" he asked, and Alan sensed that the man had made his decision to do no harm to this guest under his roof.

"I would gladly feast with you," said Alan gravely, "were circumstances different...it has come over me that you are Timur, Governor of Bokhara, and that the Shah, your master, has commanded you to seize my person...a matter which you are now loath to do. Should I feast with you and be permitted to depart, it would likely bring ruin upon you..."

"It is my risk and my penalty!" said Timur, with a trace of asperity.

"It is a risk and a penalty which I cannot permit you to take!" returned Alan, his own voice cold. "Therefore bring witness to what I shall say to you, that word may be carried to the Shah...and I will depart."

Alan sensed that a great weight had been lifted from Timur. He felt it a pity that he and this Turk could not be friends.

"You have put me under great obligation!" said Timur stiffly, and beckoned to one on the divan. This one, in rich Moslem robe came, somewhat unwilling, seeing that he had to face a Christian knight, and then would have halted entirely when he recognized Alan. For his part Alan looked through and beyond the man calling himself Marouk, as though he did not exist, which added more fuel to the flame of the renegade's hatred.

Dropping hand on sword hilt, Alan spoke with dignity, addressing the governor, Timur:

"My gratitude, O Timur, is boundless, for your invitation to feast with you," he said, "but I am ambassador to Genghis Khan...who awaits my coming and will not brook delay. Were I to tarry here it might be misunderstood and blame attached to you. As a small pebble can start a great avalanche, so I would not risk by delaying my journey, to bring the avalanche of the wrath of Genghis Khan down to overwhelm you or yours...and again my gratitude and so . . . farewell!"

Turning, he strode from the hall. The man calling himself Marouk gazed after him, his wrath tempered with a sudden qualm of uneasiness.

The hook-nosed old *ferrash-bashi,* Mirza-Gaffar, already bewildered by the turn of events, was reduced to open mouthed astonishment when he saw the Nasrani knight issue forth confidently from the doorway. Alan called his men to horse and moved out the gate. The Seljuk Turks outside, being without orders, let the grim-eyed Nasranis pass.

There came then, hurrying out of the hall, Marouk, his face deep lined with thought. "Send at once a spy to follow that Nasrani... discovering especially what road he travels and where he halts for the night!" Marouk gave order to Mirza-Gaffar, who hastened to obey.

The Seljuk officer commanding the janissaries, still waiting without orders on the road outside, came in, troubled.

"Lead your men in swift pursuit of those Nasranis!" commanded Marouk, "slaying whom you will of the men but under no condition slaying the knight . . . him I must have alive and unhurt!"

For it had occurred to Marouk that there might be more strength to this Genghis Khan than he knew...and in such case it behooved a prudent man to make provision for his future.

ALAN moved his column of horsemen sedately enough until they had passed out of sight of the gates. The sumpter mules were awaiting sheltered in the trees. Gathering them in, he set a faster pace.

"Having refused the governor's invitation to feast, what now?" asked Brian, his younger brother, riding on his left, with Alan's shield.

"The governor will not be able to prevent his janissaries being sent after us," returned Alan. The words were scarce out of his mouth when Ghulam came galloping up from behind them.

"Some two score Seljuks are close behind us, scimitars in hand!" he called.

His own force outnumbered by nearly four to one, Alan kept at the gallop until he found a wooded slope commanding a goodly stretch of road.

Ordering his men to dismount, he set the horses and sumpter mules back among the trees. His men ran forward to the edge of the woods, cross-bows in hand, the muffled thunder of many galloping hoofs growing louder by the moment. All his small force was on line, including the Syrian muleteers; Alan cautioned the prone men to await his word, to fire.

The moon was casting faint shafts of light across the road. Those suddenly became broken by swift-moving, black shadows and the gleam of moonlight on steel. The head of the Seljuk column was in view, coming as a dark mass, growing longer by the second, as it neared.

When the entire force was in view, scarce fifty paces distant, Alan gave word.

The twelve cross-bows twanged as one. The iron quarrels sped sibilant, remorseless, into the close-packed Turkish men and horses.

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The goat's-foot levers, pulling back the cross-bow cords in one motion, aided the swift speeding of a second volley and yet a third. The road was heaving with turmoil below them . . . riderless horses milling about . . . screams of pain from wounded men and animals . . . Seljuk Turk riders still unhurt, were riding in confusion, seeking the source of the death that had struck among them.

With his men, Alan ran to the horses, with swift mounting and drawing of swords. With the sergeants riding behind him like an armored wall, the force swept down on the road. The long Crusader swords rose and fell, shearing through lighter Moslem mail and over-reaching shorter Moslem scimitars.

The darkness made it hard to tell friend from foe . . . Alan shouted to his men to reform line, and led them, smashing through the last of the resistance. The surviving Seljuks fled whence they had come. The road was clear of all except the dead and dying Moslem men and horses, and the riderless horses whinnying in panic.

These last his men gathered in, but Alan gave them no time to search the bodies of the slain but led them rapidly on their way.

Nor did anyone note that a shadow followed them, a horseman whose white *khalat* showed faint against the black shadows of the road and trees.

The spy sent by Mirza-Gaffar at the command of Marouk, the renegade knight, was following stubbornly.

The watchman in the small tower above the gate of the Shaykh's house hailed them and cressets were set aflame. The gate opened and the head servant of the Shaykh Kassim bade them welcome. Alan watched his men file through the narrow gate, nor noted the white *khalat* of the spy sent by Marouk, fading back into the shadows and turning about to make his way back to report.

At the last Alan sat his saddle there alone, the light from the cressets playing upon his tall figure, and upon the emblazoning of his shield and pennon. He would have turned to follow his sumpter mules through the gate when a stir in the shadows beyond the cresset flare caught his attention.

Three men, beggars by their dress, came into the circle of light, and eyeing that shield, suddenly dropped to their knees, making deep obeisance. One among them, raised his eyes, and hand to lip, in the Mongol salute, awaiting his permission to speak. Alan nodded.

"Kai!" said the Mongol.

"Ahatou!" said Alan, giving the greeting, and waited.

"I bring word from *him we serve!*" said the man, rising, and drawing forth a small silver cylinder. From this he unrolled a square of thin rice paper. Alan, seeing the seal in the corner, dismounted from his horse as was the custom at seeing the seal of Genghis Khan. He then motioned the three to follow him within.

Candles were lighted in the luxurious library of the Shaykh's mansion, while the man, who identified himself by name as Tuyuk the Torgut, translated the fine scrolled Ugriac writing, itself a variation of ancient Syriac, taught the Mongols by Nestorian priests, long dead.

"Greetings, O Iron Man!" it read, that being Alan's name in the Horde. "We must know, concerning Bokhara. Whether the hearts of its governor, its garrison and its inhabitants are as strong as its walls!"

Alan sat silent. The short message was typical of Genghis Khan who never used two words when one would suffice. The sage *Kha Khan* was striving to learn whether Bokhara could be taken by guile or had to be taken by force.

He marvelled at this Mongol ruler, and how he communed over vast distances with hundreds of his agents and spies throughout the length and breadth of Islam, and how he assembled, before ever loosening his Horde, vast store of knowledge of the enemy, his dispositions, strength and weaknesses, thus knowing when and where to strike with utmost effect.

"Came this by *Yam?*" asked Alan at last, referring to that marvellous horse-post of Genghis Khan, its post relay stations extending out from Karakoram in the Gobi desert, to distant China; to the border of the Arctic wastes of Siberia, and to the armies in the field above in High Asia, with mounted couriers, at full gallop, changing horses at each post.

"Nay, lord, by pigeon post!" said Tuyuk the Torgut, whereat Alan knew that the message was imperative and its carrying out of great moment.

"And *him we serve?* He is far from here?" he asked.

"Nay, lord, even now the advance guard of the Horde descends from the high valleys of the Roof of the World, assembling nigh the Sungarian Gates!" Alan's eyes widened. This was nearer than he had thought—there was no time to be wasted.

He sent out word that a fresh horse from the stables of the Shaykh be saddled and made ready. Brian and Ghulam came in, querying, and protesting his departure to return to Bokhara immediately.

"Why permit this Mongol chieftain to send you hither and yon on any of his missions he lists?" asked Brian. "He but makes use of you as he wills!"

"Granted," said Alan, "but don't forget that I am here to solicit the help of Genghis Khan against our Moslem foes in Palestine, and that any service I can perform for him may hasten that aid to the hard-pressed Knights of the Holy Sepulchre!"

It was the long view and they were forced to give in.

Instructing the men that they should depart from the Shaykh's house at dawn, hiding out in the nearby woods, and at the last, telling Ghulam to join him at dawn at the city gates, Alan departed alone, his chain mail and helm well-covered by the hooded *khalat*, of gray wool.

CHAPTER III

SWORD OF THE CRUSADER

ALAN, at considerable risk, finished his business in Bokhara, coming forth next morning in a press of country carts and people fleeing from the city to seek safety in the south.

There had settled upon him a feeling of disquiet and foreboding. Ghulam was waiting for him in the grove of tamarisks beyond the Lion Gate. With one look at his servant's face, Alan knew that there were bad tidings.

"Thy brother, lord!" Ghulam was near to tears, "O the pity of it!..."

"Has Brian been slain?" asked Alan, his voice harsh with pain.

"Nay, lord...carried away captive... that dog of a convert to Islam...that foul Marouk...may he drink boiling water eternally in Gehenna...we moved out from the Shaykh's house as you commanded...but in the darkness before dawn none thought to waken thy brother...he was left sleeping the sound sleep of youth...Marouk appeared with five hundred bridles, Seljuk Turks, and carried him away...leaving a message with Mustapha, the Shaykh's servant, for you!"

Alan said no word. With face set, he spurred his horse and rode silent. Ghulam dared not address him, so stern was his mien.

The head servant of the Shaykh, met him at the gate of the Shaykh's country house.

"That foul Marouk left a missive for thee, lord...it is writ in the Frankish writing and I do not know its purport..." and he brought forth a square of paper, folded and addressed to the Sieur Alan de Beauchamp.

Alan read the crabbed monkish script, in Norman-French, face growing more grim with each word, until at the last, the servant grew frightened at the cold wrath in the eyes of the Nasrani knight.

"What is it, lord?" ventured the old man. "Doth the missive carry bad tidings?" Ghulam came up, anxious.

"They could scarcely be worse!" said Alan in strained voice. "Marouk demands that I intercede for him with Genghis Khan and secure for him written pledge of assurance from harm, should the Mongols break into Bokhara..."

"And if you do not?" asked Ghulam.

"If I do not place such pledge in his hands before the rising of the new moon of Ardibihist, he swears that he will have my brother, Brian, blinded and put to the torture, to die a lingering death." Alan's voice shook though he strove to control it.

A shocked silence fell upon Mustapha and Ghulam as they realized to the full what Marouk intended...Ghulam knowing the deep affection his lord had for his younger brother.

Alan, white and silent, found his

thoughts in turmoil...the new moon of Ardibihist...it was short enough time... there was need for him to join Genghis Khan swiftly...to go back to Bokhara now was to court certain death...a price of a thousand pieces of gold had already been put on his head through the hatred of that renegade knight, Marouk...and Brian...he had been seen the torn and mangled bodies of men subjected to Turkish torture!... the thought set him seething...he strove to think calmly...to plan a course of action...his best and only hope was to join up with Genghis Khan's forces as swiftly as possible and return in strength...in time.

There was need for speed. He rigorously strove to crush out all thought of the peril hanging over Brian.

"Cease thy mourning, Ghulam," he tried to comfort his servant. "Allah may yet find a way...assemble me two score stout horses..."

Good Diccon was puzzled at the extra horses.

"There is need for haste," said Alan, "we ride as the Mongols ride—carrying out food on the saddle and changing from horse to horse, riding day and night with little halting...do you, Diccon, see to leaving the mules here with the Shaykh's servants, changing the packs to horses, lightening the packs of all save spare crossbow quarrels, horseshoes and weapon gear—"

Diccon and the sergeants were plainly scandalized, but set about obeying, the Sieur Alan giving them no time to protest.

As the activity was at its height, there came a loud knocking at the outer gate.

Ghulam listened, fear in his eyes.

"Get thee gone, lord, for the love of Allah!" he begged. "It may be those Turks fiends from the Bottomless Pit returned to search for thee!"

It turned out however to be Tuyuk the Torgut, coming for Alan's report on Bokhara, which was duly enscribed in flowing Ugriac script and despatched by pigeon post to Genghis Khan's *ordu*.

THERE was pressing need for Alan to start his march immediately. To depart, leaving behind his brother, Brian, under the shadow of the sword, or worse, was like an aching wound. His gloom was not lightened by the spirit of his men, old soldiers who resented any innovation but especially anything stemming from the Mongols.

"To mess up good Christian fightin' ways by copyin' they squidgy nose, squat little heathen tricks, will be bringin' us grief!" they grumbled, and "How's a man goin' to have room for sword play, leadin' three horses...we're no better than stinkin' horse copers on the way to the fair!" They were disciplined men and veteran fighters, nowise lacking in the old soldier's ability to get his viewpoint over to his leader.

Alan, knowing the forces of the Shah were out in force, seeking to probe out the Mongol strength, saw lively possibilities of fighting ahead of him before he won through to Genghis Khan. Looking back at his somewhat unwieldy force, hampered with the extra horses, he found a sheltered spot and drilled them in the Mongol manner of disposing of spare horses in battle.

It was a simple matter of converging in a circle, of fastening the lead rope of each three horses to the next three and backing out, leaving the lead horses securely tethered in a circle and the fighting men free to ply their weapons.

The sergeants gave grudging approval to this. They became adept at it, and also at galloping continuously, changing from horse to horse, marvelling at the great distances covered, at least four times the length of their average daily march.

They had need of their newlyfound skill. Increasing signs of the presence of hostile horsemen of the Shah's forces began to show, the distant flash of steel on the high ground, broad tracks of mounted bodies moving up into the foothills, on the lower ground.

With the great urgency that was upon him to get through to the Horde, and return in time for that fateful new moon of Ardibihist, Alan dreaded encountering a large force of the Shah's horsemen. He moved with caution through the hills and valleys. But this caution availed him little.

It was on the fourth day, that, debouching from a narrow valley, which was like a sword cut in the hills, he led his forces at a gallop down onto the floor of a broader valley.

Too late, he saw them, heard a distant shout go up...not two thousand paces distant, there showed the pointed Moslem helmets and flashing scimitars of Seljuk Turk horsemen, at least five hundred of them.

They had already sighted him and were galloping down upon him.

His heart heavy within him at the great force of his enemies, Alan turned his column about, galloping at speed into the shelter of that narrow gut from whence he had just issued.

There was small chance of escaping by flight...with five hundred horses against two score, the odds were in favor of the pursuer catching up with his fastest horses, while the pursued was held back by the speed of his slowest.

"We will make our stand here!" he said, ordering all horses tethered in a circle, behind them in the narrow place.

The men hurried with him, cross-bows in hand, and lances on shoulder, to hold the narrow entrance of that place. The Seljuks were half way to them, when Alan ordered bundles of brush cut and thrown in front. Thomas Little, with flint and steel, set fire to them, hoping the smoke and flames would delay the Moslem horses.

There was the slight advantage, that no more than ten horsemen at the most could breast that narrow rising way, at a time. But the outlook was bleak and the men's faces were grim as they watched that mass of horsemen sweep toward them.

They were so near now that the lean faces of the Turks could be picked out, the long Turkish line narrowing into column, the leading ten approaching that burning brush. Not until the leading Moslem horses began to check at sight of the flame and smoke did Alan order the iron cross-bow quarrels unloosed. At that near range, the iron missiles tore a great gap in the first line and struck with deadly effect in the second.

Those Turks in rear, accustomed to the old style and cumbrous winding of the *arbalest* by small hand winch, forced the weight of horses to press to the front. This drove forward those unfortunates facing the deadly rain of bolts.

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The toll of dead and wounded Turkish men and horses mounted swiftly, piling up a slippery barrier that further impeded the enemy. So great was the toll, that, at the last, a blast on a *nakir*, the Turkish battle trumpet, halted the attack and the foremost Turkish horsemen turned about and streamed back to the plain.

The sergeants-at-arms rushed forward jubilant, to recover their iron quarrels from the dead and wounded. Alan was not jubilant. The Turks' next move, if they made it, would spell the end.

If, as he reasoned, the enemy dismounted and attacked on foot under cover of high-angle, arrow fire, his little group was doomed to die fighting. The Turk forces were halted, he saw men reach for the bows and start dismounting.

There was one last desperate hope.

"To horse!" he shouted. "Abandon the lead horses to follow after!" and ran to his own mount, his men swiftly into saddle behind him.

FOR eight men to attempt to cut their way through such a host of foes was akin to seeking death. But to die fighting in the saddle suited a knight and the sergeants better than being overborne on foot . . . and there was always the chance that one or two would get through.

They forced their horses through the dying embers and smoke of the fires, picked their way through the piled-up dead and wounded men and animals and came out in line.

The lead horses, seeing their stable mates departing, crowded after them. Alan dropped lance in rest, brought shield against left side and spurred forward, his men riding in line behind him, lance points at the ready.

The Turks, part dismounted, looked up startled, and ranks began to form against this small force so recklessly assailing them.

Alan struck at their flank, avoiding those dismounted bowmen on the far side. The steel-tipped, armored line smashed into a double rank of Seljuks, tearing a gap through them. Behind these were other masses, and the impetus of the heavy line carried Alan and his men part way into them before the press grew too great.

He set the example, slinging lance and drawing his long Crusader sword. The Turks gave back before the terrible slashing of those great blades, Alan cutting his way deeply into their press, his men boring grimly through behind him.

"Dieu lo vult!" God wishes it! His voice rang out in the Crusader's battle cry, to hearten his men, and they took up the shouting, hewing and hacking. Their swords beat down the shorter Turk scimitars, and bit deeper into thinner Turkish mail, their armor deflected the spear points. The press grew thicker, the Turks outside the ring of fighters pressing those near at hand, until there was scarce room for man and horse to move.

A Turk leaned across Alan's horse, attempting to strike with a dagger. Alan brought the heavy hilt of his sword down on the man's face, smashing it.

Just when Alan figured the few minutes of life left him, before this great press should swallow up him and his men, a strange thing happened. There came two sharp imperious blasts on the *nakirs*, the Turkish war trumpets. All the Moslems began quickly to disengage. Alan had room for sword play at last. He paused as the enemy drew back from around him and began to form up again in squadrons. In a few seconds the ground around Alan's force was clear and his little group of hard-pressed men, drew gasping breath and looked about them. Thomas Little was trying to get his left arm, numbed by the glancing blow of a battle mace, into working again. Peter Lacknose was bleeding from a scimitar slash on the cheek, Will the Bowman was working a Turkish arrow out of his horse's neck. But now all eyes turned to the Turks, following the direction into which their line was re-forming.

The sergeants-at-arms stared, unbelieving, at what they saw half way down the valley floor. It was a mounted troop—scarce a hundred horsemen all told, riding shaggy horses. They were sombre and savage looking, squat and ill favored, their dark faces rendered even darker by the coating of grease that protected their bony features from wind and sun.

"Mongols! *Grâce à Dieu!* Thanks to God!" called Alan and his men looked at him strangely, and back again at that small force of nomad horsemen, riding so

silently and impassively against nearly five times their number.

The long line of Turks began to shout derisively and surged forward, each man anxious to be in at the kill of this puny enemy.

As the Mongols drew nearer, Alan saw the red lacquered armor of the Urut clan showing under their shaggy, wolf-skin coats. They rode in five ranks. The Turks were now shouting their contempt of the fur and leather clad nomads daring to approach them. The Mongol squadron took up the gallop. Alan's sergeants shook their heads, seeing them gallop into what looked like certain destruction. Alan stroked the neck of a nervous lead horse that nuzzled his knee. "Wait!" he said.

The sergeants began to wonder when the two leading ranks of the Mongols suddenly swept forward in a single loose line. As they came within a few paces of the Turkish horsemen, the sinewy nomads suddenly erupted a volley of thrown lances, striking among Turk men and horses. This was followed by a terrific rain of short, broad-bladed, Mongol arrows, fired at close range and with deadly effect from their powerful Mongol horse-bows.

THE Turkish line was suddenly plunged into milling confusion. The Mongol horse-bowmen turned right, galloping along the Turkish front, pelting the disorganized line with arrows, galloping off to a flank.

The three remaining Mongol rear ranks, more heavily armored, smashed through into the disorganized Turkish line. They plied swords and short-handled axes, the Mongol men fighting in furious silence, the Mongol horses raging with shrill neighing.

Alan and his men were off on that flank where the Mongol bowman had withdrawn. Unnoted by the Turks, these had reformed their line. Alan called his man and rode toward them, followed by the lead horses. The sergeants glancing over their shoulders, saw that the Mongols who had been fighting like demons within the Turkish line, had suddenly turned tail and were evidently in flight. The startled Turks took a minute or two to realize that their foes had fled.

Then as realization hit them they gave a great shout of triumph and, every man for himself, the Turks streamed out in pursuit. Alan formed line on the left of that line of Mongol bowmen, waiting tense, their eyes fixed on the Turks streaming by.

Suddenly they moved forward, Alan and his men with them.

The fleeing Mongol heavy armored men had turned, like swallows, and flung themselves at the disorganized Turks pursuing them.

That line of Mongol bowmen, Alan and his men galloping with them, closed on the flanks and rear of the Turkish host. Both Mongol units closed in, like two arms of a pincers, slowly squeezing the Turks between them.

Followed a shifting, deadly melee, the Turks cut off in little groups, the Mongols tearing at them, until the shredded remnants of the Turks began by twos and threes, and then larger groups, to seek safety in flight. Alan and his men had been hewing with their great swords until there were no more foes to cut down.

The Mongol squadron rapidly formed up, seemingly without command and sat silent, in perfect order. Alan rode forward toward their leader, shield behind his shoulder, right hand raised in the Mongol gesture of peace.

The Mongols stared, their beady, inscrutable eyes taking in the view of this strange warrior, in his dark, oiled chain mail. Then their eyes widened as he spoke to them in their own tongue.

Their leader, a thin faced centurion, with mustaches drooping like rat's tails on either side of his bony chin, rode forward, his slender lance with its tuft of red horse plume, carried at the ready. Alan's horse, catching the unfamiliar scent of the Mongols swung about, sideways, and Alan's shield came suddenly into view.

Then a most curious thing happened.

The centurion, startled, looked back at his men and made a single motion downward with his hand, then threw himself out of his saddle and knelt, head bowed, hand on his lips, with all his hundred warriors off their horses and kneeling likewise. The sergeants stared amazed. Alan himself was puzzled to discover the

cause of this abject obeisance but gave the formal greeting nevertheless. The centurion replied by identifying his squadron.

"Lord, we are of the Urut Guard, of the Fourth *Chilia* (regiment) of the Third *Tumen* (division) of the *Ur* (army corps or army) of the *Ur-Khan,* Prince Juchi!" and waited, respectful.

Now Prince Juchi was the eldest son of Genghis Khan, a moody, headstrong and self-willed youth whom Alan recalled to mind not too happily.

"And Prince Juchi and the main body of the *Ur,* where are they?" he asked.

The centurion pointed.

"Two days' ride toward the setting sun," he said, "they seek out the forces of the Shah, now assembled against them somewhere in the foothills."

Alan looked up, startled, matters were moving more rapidly than he had known.

"And *him whom we serve?*" he asked, referring to Genghis Khan in the oblique Mongol fashion.

"Toward the setting sun, one day's march, and two days' march in rear of Prince Juchi," said the centurion. Then in respectful tone, added, "With my lord's permission I am commanded to follow any of the Shah's forces we meet and find their larger groups..."

"Ye have my leave to depart," said Alan. The Mongols were quickly back in saddle. The centurion bowed low—the horse-hair tufted Mongol lances came down level, in a sweeping salute and were raised again, and they galloped away, following the trail of the fleeing Turks.

The sergeants were impressed, their respect for Mongol fighting prowess vastly increased.

Several days later, their approach to that broad river valley where Genghis Khan's main body was assembled, filled them with even greater wonder.

CHAPTER IV

THE MONGOL HORDE

WHEN they came down that wooded road that led to the plain, a vast murmuring noise broke upon the ears of Alan and his force. As they neared, it grew deeper in tone, sounding not unlike the breaking of surf on distant cliffs. With closer approach they could distinguish the different notes making the chorus, the neighing of thousands of horses, the challenging squealing of stallions, the voices of a multitude of warriors, the creaking of carts and the shrill clamor of trumpeters practicing the signals used in battle maneuvers.

When at last the great camp came into view, the sergeants grew silent. There were all of sixty thousand warriors there, three *tumens* and the Guard *tumen,* of ten thousand men, and thirty thousand horses each, in addition to the siege trains and supply trains.

Alan, viewing this great assemblage, knew that it was only part of the Horde, possibly one-fourth, and wondered where the rest of it might be. The ground was covered with the Mongol *yurts,* the dome-like tents, of heavy black felt, supported by tent poles, easily stowed in the two-wheeled *kibitkas,* the Mongol carts. Dominating them all was a great white felt pavilion, the *ordu,* or headquarters of Genghis Khan.

It was under that white felt canopy, he reflected, that rested his hopes of returning to Bokhara before the new moon of Ardibihist, drawing nearer every day.

He came into the outskirts of the great camp, entering the part of the camp that held the siege trains. These, as he knew, were in charge of a Chinese *Ko pao yu,* or Master of Artillery, who, with his men, handled all the skilled work of building and using the *ballistas,* the heavy machines used either for casting great stones or fire-pots of flaming sulphur; the mangonels, the lighter casting machines, and the fire throwers proper. In addition they handled the *ho-pao* the fire gun, using gunpowder.

Passing out of the Chinese artillerists' area, he led his men into the Mongol section of the camp, and was puzzled at the vast deference he excited, men bowing low at sight of him. It came to him that it must be his shield that brought such notice, recalling that he had not borne his escutcheon, that golden leopard's head, either on pennon or shield when he had been with the Mongols before. Since then, on his return to Palestine, he had been

knighted in battle in Egypt. He had also succeeded to his father's title and barony and had the right and duty to wear the armorial badge of his family.

His friend, Chatagai, was absent but his officers made Alan welcome in their unemotional Mongol fashion, assigning *yurts* for himself and his men and place on the horse lines for his animals.

It was incumbent upon him to make immediate visit to the *ordu* of the Mongol leader of the Horde, and although it was only a few hundred paces distant, Mongol custom required that he should ride that distance on horseback.

The great pavilion of Genghis Khan was large enough to shelter several hundred men, under its silk lined white felt.

At the entrance stood a massive silver table holding great silver bowls filled with mare's milk, meats and fruits.

The captain of the guard, a centurion, splendid in black lacquered armor and silver wolf skin coat, raised his hands to lips in salute to the tall knight.

Alan strode into the pavilion. A fire of aromatic woods crackled cheerfully in the center space. Around the walls, sat many high officers and officials, talking in low grave tones, in Mongol fashion with few wasted words and many pauses for reflection. He saw familiar faces among them, and nodded in greeting, making his way decorously toward the far end of the pavilion.

There was a heavily carved chair of vermilion lacquer, resting upon the white horse-hide, the symbol of khan-ship, this on a silken Chinese rug of deep jade green. Seated in the chair was a squat, heavy figure, dressed in long sable coat, and wearing a belt of carved gold plates. The face was that of a man in his early sixties, seamed and bronzed by the sun of the Gobi, the eyes puckered with much squinting through desert sun and dust. An impress of calm power was stamped upon that face, power that could be sensed as soon as one entered the great pavilion. The eyes were keen and intelligent, missing no movement of those coming and going. He was like a patient and dignified old wolf, war-scarred and wise, this man Genghis Khan, born Temujin, meaning "the finest steel", the first born son of Yesukai the Valiant,

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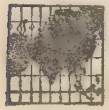
Khan of the Yakka, or Great Mongols, who was master of forty thousand tents.



ALAN, waiting until the Mongol leader should finish his talk with the several officers around him, reflected upon the stormy career that befell this eldest son of Yesukai the Valiant. For his father was killed while he was but thirteen. He had been too young to hold his clansmen together. He was hunted down like a wild wolf cub by uncles and other aspirants to the leadership of the Yakka Mongols. He had kept his mother and brothers together, nourished and alive, evaded his foes and finally began to overcome his tribal enemies. Thereafter he commenced slowly, to gather a following, to the point where he could battle successfully against other khans. Finally, with his Yakka Mongols, he brought all the warring tribes of Mongolia under his sway, ruling over Tartars, Kariats, Uighurs, Kirghez and Western Turks, the present Horde being made up of all these peoples.

With these forces he overcame swiftly and brilliantly, the great Chinese Empire of the Chin dynasty, and established his governors over it. Alan, recalling that campaign, felt pity for the arrogant Shah and the doom he faced.

It was after this conquest that the *kurultai,* the assembly of all the great khans of High Asia, gave him the title of *Genghis Kha Khan,* the Greatest of All Rulers, the Emperor of All Men, Alan recalled.

Having extended his dominions from Korea on the east to the borders of Turkestan on the west, he now was poised with his great Horde, on the borders of the western world, filling the hearts of its peoples and rulers with foreboding. They had good reason for fear, reflected Alan, knowing what he knew of the military genius of this nomad warrior leader.

The eyes of the old Mongol leader finally came to rest upon Alan and he beckoned the tall knight forward. Alan waited for him to speak.

Genghis Khan wasted no words.

"You have stated, O Iron Man, that the walls of Bokhara are strong. But walls are no stronger than the hearts of their defenders. What of the defenders of Bokhara?" he spoke slowly, as though measuring out each precious word.

"The hearts of the people of Bokhara are not as strong as their walls, O Kha Khan. Were it not for the governor and the thirty thousand Turks of the garrison, Bokhara would open its gates to you!"

The old ruler considered this for a moment.

"And these Turks of the garrison . . . how strong are their hearts?" he asked.

"As strong as the heart of their commander, a certain Marouk, a man of mine own race," said Alan.

"And the strength of his heart?" pressed the old leader.

"He has asked me to secure safeguard from you, promising him security of person should the Mongols take Bokhara!" said Alan, his face impassive.

The old ruler considered this for a moment.

"Nay, I give him no safeguard unless he aids me greatly in taking Bokhara," he said at last.

"Will you give me written message promising him that?" asked Alan.

This required more thought. At last the old Khan spoke.

"I do not like making promises," he said. "Word breaking in a ruler is hideous. What shall it be said of a man who makes a promise at dawn and breaks it before nightfall? . . . A strong man alone, no matter what his strength, cannot take a city. But a weak man alone can surrender a city. I will give written word to this weak man, promising life to him if he gives strong aid in easing my taking of Bokhara!" and Genghis Khan turned to his counsellor and friend, the Chinese sage, Ye Liu Chutsai, and commanded the writing of the paper. It was given to Alan at last and he waited for the old Mongol leader to speak. The slow, deliberate voice came again.

"I am sending forth two armies to seek out and destroy the Shah's forces—my sons, Juchi and Chatagai striking from the west, Chepe Noyan striking from the east—Juchi has orders to move on Bokhara—you, O Iron Man, have studied Bokhara. It may be that you can aid Juchi. I have seen you in battle, wisely considering the ground and the foe. Juchi is too young as yet to consider those

matters, believing only in rushing at the enemy. Ride at his elbow, O Iron Man, and give him wise counsel . . ."

Alan listened to this with mixed emotions . . . elation that he might yet have a chance of getting to Bokhara before the rising of the new moon of Ardibihist . . . dismay that he was called upon to give counsel to Juchi, the most headstrong and arrogant of the Kha Khan's sons.

"I will join Juchi," he said, "and strive to aid him. Now concerning the matter of my embassage . . . O Kha Khan!"

But Genghis Khan interrupted him.

"That can wait . . . Bokhara is near and Palestine is far." And he made sign that the talk was terminated, which meant that no further word could be spoken.

THREE days later, Alan and his small troop had caught up with Juchi's *tumen* of ten thousand horsemen. The Mongol warriors rode in battle formation, their spare horses following them far in the rear. It took Alan nearly two hours to pass through these. Leaving his own spare horses with the herd, he made his way to the head of the main column, his men behind him, consuming nearly an hour more in arriving at last where Juchi rode with his group of officers and that *Shaman,* the soothsayer Tourgai, who had such evil influence with the young prince.

"Ho, Iron Man!" Juchi greeted him sourly. "Many moons have waxed and waned since I saw you last. What brings you here?"

"Your father, O Juchi, considering that I have studied Bokhara, and its garrison and walls, has commanded me to join you and give you such knowledge as I have," Alan stated.

"When I have need of your knowledge, O Iron Man, I shall ask for it!" said Juchi harshly. The shaman Tourgai, nodded solemnly.

"The stars are propitious for my lord, the prince Juchi," he said, "and he has no need of counsel other than that provided by the spirits of the upper air!"

They were entering a long valley, narrow, and with steep hills on either side. It was a marvellous place for an ambush or a surprise, Alan felt, and he could see no signs of Juchi's scouts covering their advance.

"Have you seen any sign of the Shah's forces, O Juchi?" asked Alan. "I am but newly come and have not heard the latest reports."

"Aye," said Juchi, indifferently, "he is somewhere about these valleys with a strong force—having attacked my foraging parties no later than yesterday."

Alan strove not to show the disquiet he felt. Across from him on the far side of the shaman Tourgai, rode a high Mongol officer, one Bela Noyan, the seneschal, or chief of staff and adviser to the young prince. Bela Noyan, catching Alan's eye, shook his head in worried fashion, then stared sharply down the valley.

Alan saw it at the same time. There was movement in the shadows cast by the narrow walls of the valley and a vast stirring. It was as though a dark river flooded toward them. Then there came what seemed flames, leaping into the air, but was actually the vanguard of a host of mounted men, coming out of the shadows into the sunlight, with silvered chain mail and damascened helmets gleaming.

"It is the banner of the Shah himself!" exclaimed Bela Noyan as a great green banner showed in the sun.

The eyes of Juchi the young prince blazed with excitement. He turned to give sign to the bearer of the Mongol standard, with its nine yak tails. The movement of this standard, up or down or dipped to the right or left, gave instant signal to the Mongol officers in rear. These repeated the signals by hand to their squadrons, whether to advance, retreat, form line or swing into column of route. It was a system of signalling that permitted the Mongol forces to move in the terrible silence that was typical of them in battle.

Alan spoke out.

"They are great in numbers, O Prince—it may be that the entire force of the Shah is advancing on us—and the valley is too narrow to maneuver your forces!"

Bela Noyan gave added warning.

"They are too great in numbers, O Prince! Even now they outnumber us more than eight to one and no man knows

how many more may yet appear. As the Iron Man says, the valley is too narrow for maneuvering our forces. Much better that you withdraw and entice them back where our entire force can come into play!"

It was sound advice, for none but the front units of the Mongol forces could come into action on this narrow front. But Juchi was headstrong.

"If I should flee, what would my father say?" he asked.

The urbane voice of the *shaman* Tourgai broke in.

"All the omens are propitious this day, O Prince, as I have foretold!"

Juchi raised his hand, fist clenched, twisting it right and left.

It was the signal for the *Manguidi,* the "God-belonging" squadrons, pre-doomed, who went into battle expecting to die. They galloped past, five hundred of them, in five ranks that extended across the valley, lances poised to throw, bows at hand and quivers filled with arrows at their knees.

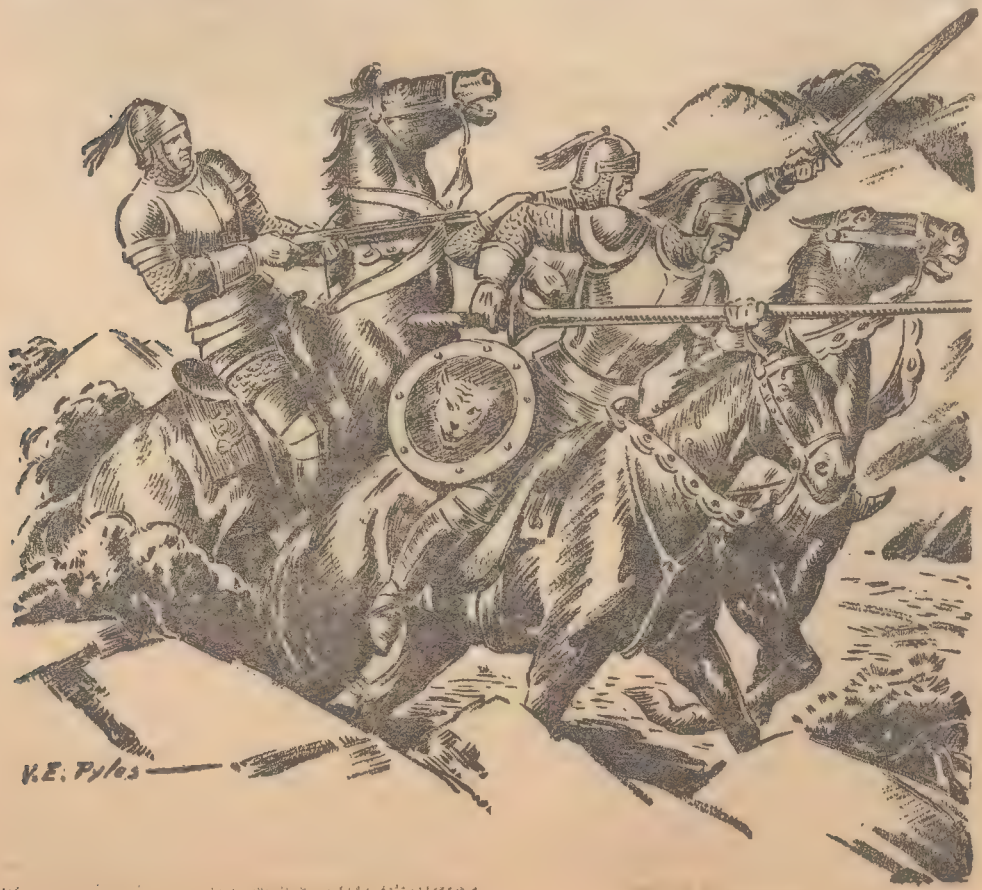
Behind them came the thunder of the hoofs of the heavier armored shock cavalry, their armor, of iron plates, pierced and held together with leather thongs, swords in the rein hand and lances in the right hand.

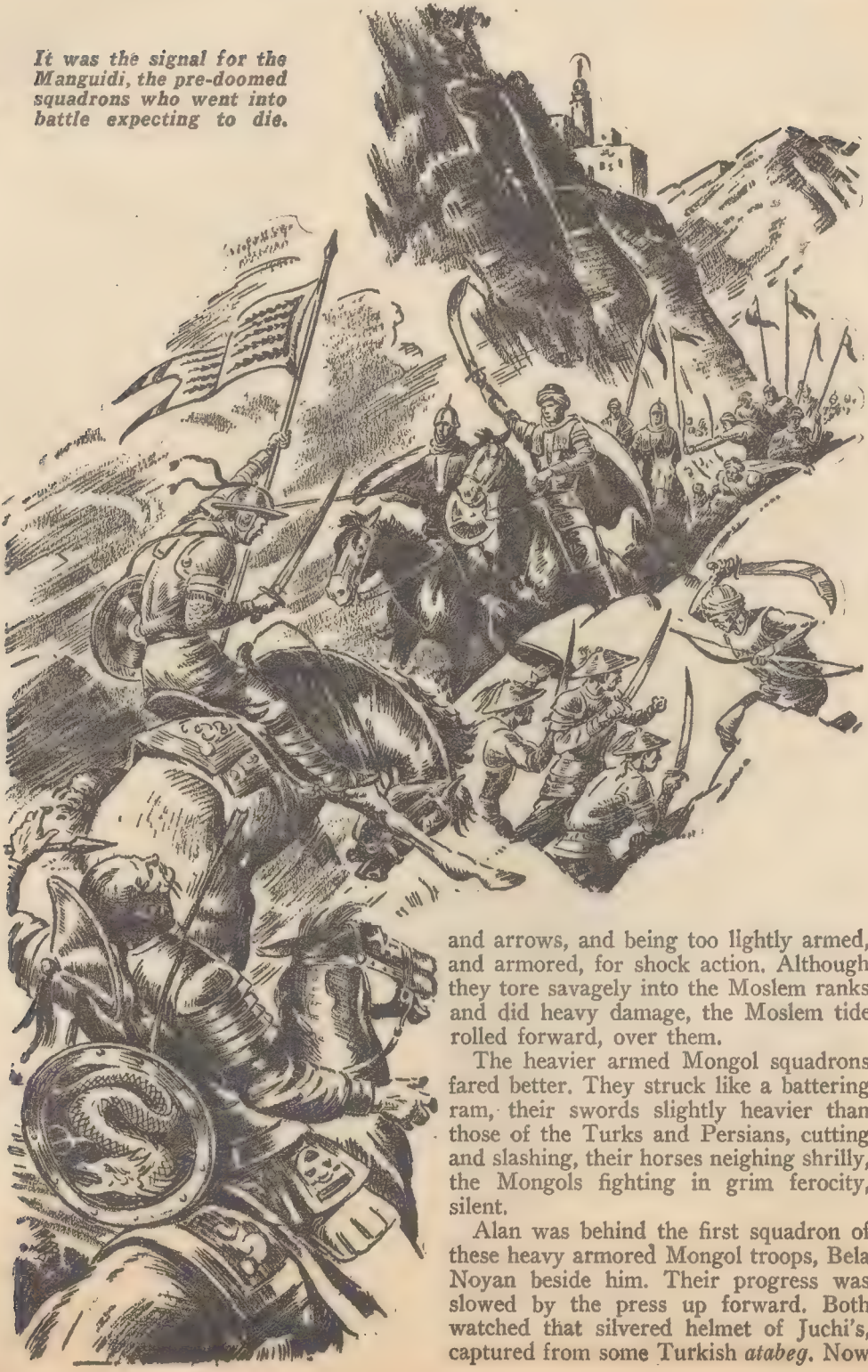
Juchi, before anyone could stop him, threw himself in front of these squadrons. Alan waved to his clump of men, and galloped after, riding beside Bela Noyan, the Mongol general.

Far ahead the Moslem host had halted, their long *nakirs,* the battle trumpets, blaring hoarsely, and the Moslems plainly contemptuous of these fur-and-leather-clad warriors, the shrill ululation of the Moslems mocking them, sounding now like a chant and again like the yelping of dogs:

"Allah il-allahu! Allah il allah!"

The *Manguidi* hit them head on, having no room to maneuver with their bows





It was the signal for the Manguidi, the pre-doomed squadrons who went into battle expecting to die.

and arrows, and being too lightly armed, and armored, for shock action. Although they tore savagely into the Moslem ranks and did heavy damage, the Moslem tide rolled forward, over them.

The heavier armed Mongol squadrons fared better. They struck like a battering ram, their swords slightly heavier than those of the Turks and Persians, cutting and slashing, their horses neighing shrilly, the Mongols fighting in grim ferocity, silent.

Alan was behind the first squadron of these heavy armored Mongol troops, Bela Noyan beside him. Their progress was slowed by the press up forward. Both watched that silvered helmet of Juchi's, captured from some Turkish *atabeg*. Now

Juchi was in amongst the Moslems, alone, his men being slowly overborne behind him by sheer weight of Moslem numbers.

THE Mongol squadron in front of Alan began to thin out. He heard a shout behind him and turning saw huge Thomas Little, Peter Lacknose and the other sergeants, Diccon at their head, the seven of them forming a steel wedge.

There was now only the thickness of one rank of Mongols between him and the Moslems. That rank was thinning rapidly. A Mongol warrior in front of him dropped, a spear thrust through his chest. The Mongol's horse rose whinnying and fell with him, a jumbled heap of threshing legs, its chest opened with a sword thrust. Alan had difficulty in forcing his own horse forward but at last found himself within sword's reach of the Moslem line. Juchi was ahead of him, surrounded with flashing scimitars and thrusting spear points. Alan's great sword rose, its long blade slashing through Moslem armor, beating down lighter, shorter scimitar and cutting down questing spear head. His blade rose and fell—shearing the arm of the Turk in front of him, and again with a backhanded slash, well nigh decapitating a second Turk. There were only a few Turks now between him and the circle about Juchi.

On his right he caught a glimpse of Bela Noyan, fighting savagely, endeavoring to reach his master's son. Behind him, Alan heard a familiar shout and, knew that his sergeants were near. He leaped his mount over a fallen horse. His sword cut a Persian officer out of the saddle. He slashed down at a dismounted Turk who struck at him from below. There was now but one Turk left between him and Juchi. Juchi's horse went down. Alan smote swiftly, between Turkish neck and shoulder, slashing cleanly down through the light chain mail. At last he was with the Mongol prince. The blade of the long Crusader sword cleared space around Juchi.

Thomas Little's long sword was hewing out at the right of Alan, and on the left Diccon was wielding his fearful Danish axe, doing frightful execution. Suddenly Alan and his men were a wall of steel around the Mongol prince. Someone of them seized a riderless horse, and, covered by Alan's shield, Juchi was mounted once more.

The scorn of the Moslems had turned now to something of awe and wonder, for the remorseless Mongol squadrons were hacking and stabbing their way into the Persian and Turkish mass, in fierce silence.

Alan and his men were far ahead, deep in the Turkish line, so deep that glancing past his opponent, in front, Alan spied a great green banner and under it a stout figure with aigrette clasped on his turban with a great ruby of Badakshan. It was the Shah Muhammad himself! The Shah was forced back through the press by his officers as Alan fought to reach him. But the great banner was still there.

Alan rose in his stirrups shouting the awe-inspiring battle cry of the Crusaders, *"Dieu lo vult!* God wishes it!" and made his sword into a terrible, scythe-like instrument of destruction, shearing into Moslem flesh and bone, carving out a passage, his great blade clearing a way, until suddenly he had cut down the standard bearer. The banner toppled into his arms, well nigh enfolding him. He tossed it back to Peter Lacknose and the sergeants formed about it and the prince, Juchi.

Behind them the Mongol forces, in obedience to some signal from the rear, were turning about, their horses slipping and sliding over the fallen bodies of men and animals. Alan, believing it might be the favorite Mongol maneuver, to simulate flight and then turn on the foe, called to his men, to fight their way out. His sergeants in front of him, they rode to the rear and none strove to stop them, those deadly long swords having created fear.

Alan's group followed the Mongols as they left the Persian-Turkish host behind them—the Moslems at first refusing to follow—as well they might, seeing that valley floor nearly solidly carpeted with their dead, fallen in the fury of the Mongol attack.

A voice hailed Alan, "Well done, Iron Man!" it called and he looked up to see Bela Noyan approaching and with him several Mongol officers. Prince Juchi

joined them, with never a backward glance at Alan nor word of thanks for his rescue.

Alan had little time to reflect upon this, for the Moslems, led by Jelal ed Din, the son of the Shah, who was infuriated by the loss of his father's great green standard, made sharp counter-attack. They came, leaning low on their horses' withers, spears gleaming, lean faces exultant.

The Mongol bowmen turned about, coming into action, pelting destruction into the close packed Turkish lines. They galloped scarce two spear lengths ahead of the Moslem warriors, guiding their horses with their knees and heels, sending such rain of destruction into the Turks that the counter-attack lost impetus, faltered and finally ceased.

The Turkish forces halted in place and the Mongols withdrew farther up the valley. That night they set fire to the grass and behind the smoke and flames withdrew silently from that place.

The next morning the Shah Muhammad rode over the field of battle, the floor of the valley piled deep with slain Moslems. A great fear entered the Shah's heart at the ferocity and skill of the Mongols.

"I have never seen men so daring and so steadfast," he told his officers, "or as skilled in giving blows with the point and edge of their swords!" And for the first time, the Shah sensed to the full, the shadow of doom that hung over him.

Genghis Khan, incensed at the heavy losses sustained by Juchi's forces, despatched message demanding explanation.

The reply was written by the *Shaman* Tourgai, who was also a scribe.

". . . because of the bad counsel given the Prince, by the Iron Man, the Prince was prevailed upon to launch his attack too soon, and in unfavorable place, from which happily, the Prince was enabled by his God-given skill, to withdraw, inflicting heavy losses on the foe . . . it should be noted moreover," continued the *shaman's* message, "that this Iron Man hath become intolerable in his pride, assuming the rank, rights and privileges of a *gur-khan* to which rank it is certain the Kha-Khan hath not raised him . . ."

Genghis Khan pondered on these tidings. Failure of the Iron Man to give good counsel to his son Juchi merited disgrace, but the second crime was more serious. The Mongol penalty for wrongful assumption of any rank was severe. But the rank of *gur-khan,* nearest in power and privilege to that of the Kha-Khan himself, carried with it the ruler-ship of a clan in the Gobi, or the governing of a conquered province abroad. It carried the power of life or death. It was equal to the military rank of *ur-khan,* commander of an army corps. Nine times would crimes meriting death be forgiven its holder. Through nine generations would the title descend through his eldest son.

To assume such rank without permission was an affront to Genghis Khan. His face darkened with anger so that men feared to approach him. At the last he turned to the Chinese sage, Ye Liu Chutsai, his friend and adviser.

"Send word to my son Juchi, telling him that his father is proud of his exploits. Send five thousand warriors to restore his losses. Mark on your tablets the name of the Iron Man, that I shall punish him so soon as I encounter him."

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CHAPTER V

A THOUSAND PIECES OF GOLD

AS for the Iron Man, unaware of having incurred the wrath of Genghis Khan, he rode with Juchi's *tumens,* marching and fighting and counting the few rapidly shortening number of days until the rising of the new moon of Ardibihist. Juchi's corps concentrated on taking the outposts of the Shah, those smaller cities on the River Syr. Behind them on the River Amou lay the Shah's second line of defense, the great cities of Samarkand and Bokhara.

The Shah, after observing those terrible losses sustained in his first battle with the Mongols, decided to split his forces to garrison these two cities, thereby committing the same grave military error that led to the downfall of the mighty Chinese Emperor at the hands of Genghis Khan.

"For look, Ghulam," said Alan, "Genghis Khan will inevitably assemble his entire forces and destroy those garrisons one by one!"

They had both seen the Mongol method of taking a city, the hurling of vast forces against the walls in unceasing storming, lasting day and night without let-up until the defenders were exhausted and fearful to the point of opening the gates.

"But Samarkand and Bokhara will not fall so easily!" asserted Ghulam.

"More easily," said Alan, "for their defenders will have lost heart and become fearful at the terrible punishment inflicted on those Turkish governors and soldiers who have resisted in these smaller cities."

"But the strong walls of Bokhara . . . nigh onto twelve leagues around!" protested Ghulam.

"Genghis Khan truly says that walls are no stronger than the hearts of the defenders," said Alan, "but whether the hearts of the defenders of Bokhara be strong or not, it is certain that Juchi's forces will not be there before the rising of the new moon of Ardibihist, three nights hence, and I must go alone into that city by then!"

"Alone! into Bokhara! with a price of one thousand gold pieces on your head? It is madness, lord!"

"No matter . . . I have already spoken to Juchi who gave assent."

Ghulam finding it impossible to sway his master, begged to be allowed to share the danger and Alan at last consented. Diccon and the other sergeants were instructed to remain with Juchi's forces and reassemble with Alan at the country house of the Shaykh outside Bokhara.

Alan and Ghulam traveled by night, hooded in their gray khalats, to avoid the outposts of the Shah's forces. They rode into Bokhara unnoted, in the great flood of fugitives fleeing from before Genghis Khan.

Now Alan had received from Bela Noyan, the name and address of the chief of Genghis Khan's adherents in Bokhara, a certain learned teacher in the university, one Khalid ed-Din, who dwelt at the end of the Street of the Silversmiths, hard by the Lion Gate.

As he and Ghulam passed through the Street of the Silversmiths, seeking for this one, a group of elderly Persians, drinking mint tea in a small shop, noted the tallness of the one rider, esteeming him to be perhaps a Circassian. But one of their number, peered over his great hooked nose, recognizing Ghulam, and rose, greed and determination glittering in his eyes.

"Take care of my account, Ali!" said Mirza-Gaffar, "I have just seen a thousand pieces of gold!" and ran out, hurrying after the two. Mirza-Gaffar noting that they were preparing to enter a house, caught a glimpse of the face of the taller one and he drew a deep breath—recognizing the Nasrani knight. Bethinking himself of the thousand pieces of gold that were about to fall into his hands, the old *ferrash-bashi* waited in the shadows of an alley across the way, until they should reappear.

Inside that house, Alan met many people, adherents of Genghis Khan, and told them that they should spread the word among the Seljuk Turkish garrison of the punishment that would be visited upon them by the Mongol conqueror, did they strive to resist.

With a price upon his head of one thousand pieces of gold, it was essential that

he adopt disguise. Because of his tallness, they made him into the likeness of a wealthy young Circassian.

This led to considerable puzzlement on the part of the watching and waiting Mirza-Gaffar, the old *ferrash-bashi,* who stared as the two came out, at the tall Circassian dumfounded, until he noted a certain swing of the shoulders that convinced him that the tall knight and the tall Circassian were one and the same.

It came now to Mirza-Gaffar that he might gain more gold and honor in discovering the business of the Nasrani knight in Bokhara. He decided to spy upon him and find out before causing the Nasrani's arrest.

A TRIO of travelling dervishes held forth in the inner garden next the high walls of the citadel. They were whirling around and round, in ecstatic silence, to the glory of Allah, in time to the monotonous but heady beating of a small drum, their skirts standing straight out, their ankle length drawers clinging to their skinny legs, and their high conical hats pointed perpendicularly to Paradise.

Their dancing ceased and the Nubian drummer came to the richly clad young Circassian, hand outstretched.

"Shayyun li 'llahi! Alms for the love of Allah!" demanded the Nubian and the young Circassian gave him a silver coin and received the blessing bestowed.

The Circassian spoke certain words to the Nubian, low-voiced, and the man dropped the coin. The Circassian graciously aided him in searching for it, both men on their knees seeking in the cracks of the pavement.

The Circassian asked a question. The Nubian mumbled reply.

"The young Nasrani who dies tomorrow night is imprisoned in the prisoner's cage, lord," he said.

There was time for two more quick questions and answers before one of the off-duty janissary guardsmen, hearing the clink of silver, sauntered over.

He was very stern in demanding who the young Circassian might be and upon what business. The young man, it seemed, had a wealthy merchant as father, who provided his son with much gold to see the sights of Bokhara. One thing the son wanted to see above all others was the inside of the citadel. The gift of one gold piece and promise of another arranged this with a minimum of difficulty.

Mirza-Gaffar, his great hook nose twitching with excitement, saw the tall Circassian pass into the courtyard of the citadel and followed. He could see nothing untoward in the conduct of the young man. There was only the guileless wonderment of a youth from the country, with much aimless talk with the guards of the different towers, including the Drum Tower.

The old *ferrash-bashi* was too far away to hear the Circassian invite the entire watch, some eight men, of the Drum Tower to some feasting, at the small inn below the citadel. This watch went on at the time of the changing of the guard, at ten o'clock. The time for the feasting was accordingly set for nine o'clock. The chance of feasting being rare on the slender pay of the janissaries, the acceptances were immediate and enthusiastic.

Thereafter the young Circassian, in his richly fashioned attire wandered out again, Marza-Gaffar shadowing like some grim portent of fate. But to the old man's consternation, his quarry became lost in the crowded rabbit warren of the streets below the citadel.

Mirza-Gaffar's anxiety led him on frantic search through the streets and bazaars. There was tense excitement all through Bokhara that day. The bazaars were full of rumors. Men said that Genghis Khan had suddenly appeared out of the desert, many miles south of the city, directly in rear of the Shah's forces and that the Shah had barely succeeded in eluding the Mongol forces and had fled to the west with his family and treasure and a few followers, and that the city might be attacked at any time.

Mirza-Gaffar listened to these matters with only half an ear, being hot on the trail of that thousand gold pieces that had slipped from his grasp.

It was not until an hour nearly nine o'clock, that the old *ferrash-bashi,* pacing back and forth near the citadel, heard a chance word from some passing janissaries, about the feast to be provided by the wealthy young Circassian.

He followed them to the inn. His heart lifted with joy, when peering through the door, he saw the young Circassian welcoming his guests. The young man had invited many other friends, most of them merchants, but others as well, one was a holy *mullah,* with his staff and amber beads, there was a vendor of religious scrolls and charms containing the ninety-nine names of Allah, and another young Circassian with a bandaged face from some wound. Mirza-Gaffar's mouth watered at sight of the good food and the *baggalis* of *raki,* the flat glass bottles of heady Persian brandy.

The feasting and the drinking lasted until nearly the time of the third watch of the night. Mirza-Gaffar made up his mind to waste no more time but report this matter of the young Circassian and claim the reward.

He was about to turn away when the lights within the inn went suddenly out. There came strange sounds out of the darkness, gurglings and the thump and thud of inert objects being moved. Mirza-Gaffar would have ventured closer except that he saw a shadow with drawn sword within the portal and sagely withdrew.

Then as suddenly as it went out, the light came on again!

Mirza-Gaffar's eyes were wide with astonishment. A most startling thing had happened!

For all the other guests, including the tall Circassian, had utterly disappeared! The janissaries of the guard were staggering out, heavy with *raki* they had consumed, one of their number commanding them to hurry, for it was nearly the hour of their going on watch!

The innkeeper was busy cleaning up the remnants of the feast when Mirza-Gaffar crept in, asking what had come of the tall Circassian and the merchants and the *mullah* and all.

The innkeeper looked at him strangely.

"Truly you talk as one afflicted of Allah, or one who has imbided too much *raki!* There were none here such as you mentioned—naught but the guardsmen who have just departed!"

Wondering if indeed his eyes had tricked him, Mirza-Gaffar wended his way to the citadel.

There was even less satisfaction to be gotten inside the citadel courtyard, all being in confusion there, with knots of janissaries discussing the latest rumor.

Mirza-Gaffar's eyes sought restlessly for sight of those janissaries whom he had seen departing from the inn. His glance came to rest, at last, upon a certain tall one, a bundle of straw under his arm, just about to enter the door that led to the prison cages below. The man turned sideways slightly, to ease his entry with that burden of straw. Mirza-Gaffar caught sight of his profile.

The old servant's eyes lighted with a gleam of avaricious joy. The thousand pieces of gold were practically in his hands!

Turning, he sped toward the Drum Tower, the abiding place of Marouk, the Nasrani convert to Islam, and commander of the Shah's garrison in Bokhara.

ALAN made his way down the stone steps leading to the prisoner cage. The damascened coat of mail he had taken from one of the janissary guards, who had been so swiftly overpowered and strangled at the inn, was tight about his great chest. A most noisome odor came from the darkness below. The straw he carried was slippery and he had to clutch it tightly for fear that the five scimitars that it concealed would slide out into view. As he rounded the last turn of the steps he saw the pool of light formed by the guard torches below.

There were two guards there, deep in talk of the wild rumors sweeping the city.

"I have been given a few pieces of silver to carry fresh straw to one of the condemned," said Alan boldly, "which silver we will share three ways . . . open the lock for me that I may deliver my burden."

The guards were obliging. One came, keys in hand to the door, and opened the clumsy lock, his brow creased in lines of worry.

"What," he asked, "of the news concerning the flight of the Shah? There is much talk that we of the garrison shall go forth to avoid the anger of Genghis Khan . . . hast heard any new report?"

"Aye," said Alan, "in a moment I will

tell what I have heard . . ." Both men stopped to listen. There was a commotion and a shouting coming from the entrance of the tower above and the sound of many men hurrying down the stairs, growing louder by the second. The dark forms of the prisoners, within the cage, bundles of abject dejection, stirred at the commotion and a murmuring broke out among them. The guards from above were rounding the last turn in the stairs.

Alan was halfway through the cage door. He esteemed it wiser not to go inside.

"Brian!" he called into the darkness.

"Now God be praised!" Brian's voice came brokenly, from the darkness.

"Quick, there are weapons in this straw! Find some stout friends and bide your time to make escape—I go—there is trouble here!" and Alan stepped swiftly back out of the open cage door as there poured down the stairs and into the prison room a mass of guards.

They were boiling about him in a second, Mirza-Gaffar pointing him out.

"Seize him . . . he is a spy! a Nasrani in pay of Genghis Khan!" shrieked the old *ferrash-bashi,* turban awry and eyes gleaming wildly at sight of that great reward so near his grasp.

Spear points were at Alan's throat and he was ringed about with scimitars.

"Take him to Marouk!" yelled Mirza-Gaffar, his mind on that thousand pieces of gold, "but wait . . . what of the bundle of straw he carried in here? Belike he brought weapons to his followers!"

Alan stood, grim faced, as guards, seizing lanterns, hurried into the prisoner cage, returning triumphantly with scimitars. Alan counted four only . . . there was a dim chance that Brian might have held on to the fifth. There was no time to consider this . . . his guards prodded him roughly up the stairs. He was taken across the courtyard, filled with excited knots of janissaries, and led into the Drum Tower.

On the second floor of this place, he was led into a luxuriously furnished hall. At the far end sat a heavy figure, behind a carved table.

Alan was brought to the table and stared calmly into the hot and unquiet eyes of Marouk, the renegade Christian knight.

"So!" Marouk's voice was suave, "you have received my message."

"And acted upon it!" said Alan shortly. Marouk raised eyebrows, questioningly.

"A strange way to act upon it," he said. "Instead of coming to me direct, you come secretly, striving to bring weapons to free your brother . . . Why?"

"It should be evident," returned Alan, "that I sought to free my brother, just in case the matter turned out badly."

"But I pledged the life of your brother against the warrant of safety from Genghis Khan . . . if you have brought that there was little need of acting secretly."

"There was need," said Alan, quietly, "seeing that the only pledge I have is from a man who has twice broken greater pledges . . . the one being his oath of knighthood and the other whatever oath of allegiance he has made to the Shah!"

Marouk's face was suddenly drained of color. There was hatred in his eyes and doom, so that Alan was certain that he was going to order his death then and there. But Marouk gripped the table edge, and forced his voice into smoothness once more.

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"The safeguard from Genghis Khan . . . you have it upon you?" and his eyes flicked toward the guards. Before he could give command to have him searched, Alan made answer.

"Nay, there are certain covenants to be performed before the safeguard is put into your hands," he said, striving to keep the note of contempt out of his voice.

What shred of honor was left to this renegade knight was flicked as by a whip. Again Marouk's eyes smoldered. Again he strove for suavity.

"And those covenants?" he asked smoothly, too smoothly to Alan's mind.

"That you shall render up my brother, on my part," he said, "and on the part of Genghis Khan, that you shall give him strong aid in taking Bokhara . . ."

Marouk's eyes widened, then he pondered this. At last he looked up, his glance veiled.

"And supposing that instead of doing these things I subject you to the torture of the white hot steel, the bowstrings and the pincers?" he suggested. "Thereby forcing you to render up the safeguard?"

"I have already supposed that," said Alan, "and have come here prepared to die . . . swiftly if need be or slowly, if needs must, but without rendering you the safeguard in either case!" There was such iron resolution in his voice that Marouk was baffled for a space. Then his eyes gleamed.

"There are other means of breaking stubborn wills," he said and, calling one of the guards, gave him a whispered command.

Wondering what thing this renegade knight was about to perpetrate, Alan waited, outwardly impassive but inwardly disquieted.

He had not long to wait. There came a stir at the entrance door and a bent and twisted Nubian slave entered, carrying a brazier of live coals. An assistant carried the tools of his craft. Alan fought down a sickish feeling at the pit of his stomach. So it was to be torture! he figured grimly, and made silent prayer that he would bear it without outcry.

The twisted form of the Nubian torturer bent over his brazier heating a slender rod of iron, the type used for blinding a man.

Alan's mind harked back to the sight of these blinded victims of Turkish punishment, broken men fumbling their sightless way through life, beset by village curs and dependent upon the chance crusts thrown them, to keep body and soul together.

There came another stir at the door and Alan glanced at the emaciated figure being led in. Cold horror struck him like a blow. It was succeeded by mounting rage as young Brian, his brother, was led forward and forced to kneel next to the brazier.

The Nubian tested his slender length of iron rod. Marouk's suave voice fell upon Alan's ears.

"There are other ways of breaking stubborn wills!" he repeated. "And perhaps thought of your brother blinded for life may convince you of the wisdom of surrendering that safeguard from Genghis Khan!" There was cold menace in Marouk's voice.

Alan gazed about him, like a trapped wolf. His eyes swept over the crowd of Seljuk janissaries between him and the door. One of them, a bandage on his face, had departed.

"We can start with the blinding of one eye, to aid you in making up your mind!" said Marouk and switched from Norman-French to Turkish. "Blind me the right eye of that infidel youth, O Selim!" he commanded.

THAT Seljuk janissary with the bandage about his face, had swept up the stairs to the quarters of the Governor of Bokhara on the floor above.

Timur was seated with his councillors when Ghulam, in Seljuk mail and helmet, broke in upon them.

"Thy pardon, lord!" he called. "But there is a matter of a fur-lined cloak and a horse between my master and thee—and my master is sore beset below . . . come, I beg thee!"

"What talk is this of a fur-lined cloak and a horse?" Timur was wroth at this interruption by a common soldier and would have signalled the guards but Ghulam quickly took the bandage from his face.

"So!" said Timur. "Thou art the serv-

ant of that one!" and he looked annoyed and somewhat impatient. "All debt is cancelled between thy master and me!" he said sharply, but rose nevertheless and followed as Ghulam led below . . .

The guards on either side of Alan, in their interest in the blinding to take place, had unwisely slackened their vigilance a little.

A sudden powerful blow from the sledge hammer that was the fist of the Nasrani knight dropped one of them. The other was picked up bodily and crashed down upon the first. A fallen scimitar was swiftly seized . . . Alan placed hand on table and vaulted over, driving both heavily shod boots full into the face of Marouk. The renegade knight fell backward, his chair toppling over. Alan seized his wrist and cruelly twisted it, forcing the man up again from the floor, half leaning over the table, his face streaming with blood.

"Perhaps the consequent loss of your head," said Alan, "may convince you of the unwisdom of blinding my brother!" and stood over Marouk, scimitar poised, ready to strike.

The renegade knight, spitting blood and a broken tooth through torn lips, gave weak signal that the Nasrani youth should be freed. Young Brian, his eyes on Alan, swept up that other fallen scimitar from the floor and stood beside him.

It was thus that the Governor, Timur, following Ghulam into the hall found them.

"How now!" Timur gazed upon the bloodied face of his commander of the garrison and the stern Nasrani knight standing over him with drawn sword. "This exceeds the bonds of patience, O Nasrani. I have paid my debt of gratitude and the score is finished . . . I cannot heed another plea for aid!"

"Nor have I asked you to heed a plea for aid!" said Alan. "I come from Genghis Khan, bearing matters of high moment which should be brought to your ear . . . but this fellow has dealt treacherously with me . . . there is need for talk between you and me without all the world listening in!"

Timur considered this, speaking at last.

"Conditions being what they are, there is merit in listening," he said. "Free Marouk, bring your brother and we will go to my private cabinet."

Marouk, freed from the menace of that scimitar and the pain of his twisted arm, saw Alan turn away to follow the governor.

"What about my safeguard?" he called, low voiced, in Norman-French. Alan turned.

"In spite of your treachery, it shall be as I have said," Alan stated. "Move swiftly to aid Genghis Khan to take the city, thereby sparing the inhabitants the horrors of a Mongol sack, and I will have your safeguard given to you outside the gate of the country house of the governor, at Karun!"

In the cabinet of the governor, Timur turned curiously to Alan, who had his arm about Brian, comforting that shaken youth.

"What was the purport of your talk with Marouk in your own tongue?" he asked.

"The same as my talk with you will be, Timur, the question of sparing this city the horrors of the Mongol sack . . ." and Alan went on, apprising Timur of the military situation, of the flight of Shah and the concentration of all Genghis Khan's forces against Bokhara. "So you see," he concluded, "that it is hopeless . . . the Shah has deserted you and the city is doomed . . . your fate if you resist, will be the fate of that governor of Otrar, who resisted the Mongols, and died with molten silver poured into ears and mouth . . ." Alan saw that he had made grave error.

"I am not such a one as Marouk!" said Timur. "I do not fear death."

"I crave pardon!" Alan made quick amend. "But there is the matter of saving useless bloodshed and suffering for thousands." And he drew quick picture of the sack of those cities on the River Syr which had resisted Genghis Khan's warriors . . . the driving forth of all the inhabitants . . . the break-up of weeping families . . . the old, the weak, and the very young, dying by the sword and bowstring . . . the more comely women chosen for the Kha Khan and higher officers . . . the skilled artisans picked out for the long and terrible journey to Karakoram in the middle of the Gobi . . . the lesser

workmen driven in gangs to repair roads and build walls, their fate to be massacred when the need for them was past . . . the weeping of the women . . . the young men throwing themselves upon the Mongol swords rather than see their women ravished . . . all the terrible picture of punishment meted out to a city that resisted the Mongol conqueror.

There was small outcry below stairs to which those two paid no heed. It was Mirza-Gaffar, tearing his hair and beard, shrieking that he had been robbed of a thousand pieces of gold by a Seljuk with a bandaged face . . . who had smote him cruelly and seized the leathern bag containing his reward.

The old *ferrash-bashi* ceased his lamenting on a sudden when someone told him that his leathern bag was even then being placed on the saddle of the tall Circassian in the courtyard. Mirza-Gaffar arrived in time to see the bandaged face of the Seljuk, his despoiler and with him the Circassian, riding out of the citadel and losing themselves in the crowded streets.

The renegade knight, Marouk, cloaked and booted as for the saddle, heard the outcry and demanded the cause, listening as Mirza-Gaffar wept but gave the old servant scant comfort, being on his way out of the city himself.

Unnoted in the darkness and confusion, there rode out through the Water Gate of Bokhara, the Nasrani knight, Alan, clad once more in his own mail and helm. With him there rode a small group.

One of this group, Ghulam, his face no longer bandaged, rode ahead, his task to seek out Marouk, at the entrance gate to the governor's house at the village of Karun . . . and, if Marouk had proved worthy, in rendering aid to Genghis Khan, to give him a certain paper, stamped with the great seal of the Mongol ruler.

CHAPTER VI

THE STRANGLER'S CORD

ALAN LED his small group carefully through the night, taking the small roads leading to the village of Karun, for the main highway was filled with troops. Even on the smaller roads, they had to use care, for it was difficult to tell friend from foe, what with Genghis Khan's main body reported near and the remnants of the Shah's army also moving in the night. At times the thudding of hoofs and the low murmur of men's voices seemed all around them. It was not until they entered on to the main road between the Shaykh's country house and the country house of the governor of Bokhara, that they were halted. A Mongol voice hailed them out of the darkness.

Alan made himself known, giving his name, his Mongol rank of *chiliarch*, or regimental commander, and the designation of his military unit. Instead of this giving him instant passage, there came suddenly from all about them, Mongol horsemen, who seized the bridles of their horses, even Alan's.

The incurious, impassive Mongol who held Alan's bridle made no reply to his protest, and he called for the centurion commanding these men. Someone rode up, a voice in the darkness, and made himself known as the centurion.

"What means this restraint of an officer of the Horde?" asked Alan, annoyed.

"I know not, lord," said the centurion, "we have orders to arrest and bring to the *ordu* of *him we serve*, you and all with you, and to use force if need be!"

"By whose orders?" asked Alan.

"By order of Prince Chatagai, the Master of Laws and Punishment!" said the centurion.

Alan digested this disquieting news in silence. It was a serious thing in the Horde to be arrested by order of the Master of Laws and Punishment, who moved only in cases involving serious violations of the code of laws, the *Yassa*, that governed the conduct of the Horde.

The Mongols led the group back along the road towards Karun. Nearing the governor's house, Alan saw the black armor of the body guard of the Mongol leader camped along the road and the gates guarded by sentries of that body, and knew that Genghis Khan had taken up his quarters here. Within the courtyard the centurion commanded them to dismount. They waited, under guard, Alan worried and wondering what misunderstanding had occurred, unaware of

the doom that hung over him. There came a clatter at the gates and more Mongols came in, leading this time, good Diccon and the sergeants-at-arms, bewildered and worried looking, until they sighted the Sieur Alan. The Mongol centurion forbade them to talk together.

At last a messenger came from within. They were ordered to enter the hall. Alan stared about him, recalling his first entry to this place. Instead of the governor seated at the end of the hall there sat the powerful figure of Genghis Khan. Around him were his officials, nearest being his son, Chatagai.

Then Alan's eyes fell with astonishment on another familiar figure . . . . Marouk, the renegade knight, his face swollen and lips cut, standing to one side. What this could portend he did not know, but that it meant no good he was certain.

The Kha Khan was seated on his great carved chair, underneath which was spread the White Horse Hide, the Symbol of his Khanship, which meant that he sat in judgment.

Prince Chatagai, the Master of Laws and Punishment, stood on Genghis Khan's right, next to him his executioner, a burly Uighar from Black Cathay, strangler's cord and sword in hand, as symbol of his office, and in readiness to carry out his tasks. For the death judgments of the Kha Khan were carried out immediately.

Alan grew more and more perturbed. The crime with which he was charged must indeed be serious to warrant all this! While waiting, he saw the evil face of Tourgai the *shaman.*

At last signal came for him to come forward.

Chatagai, the Master of Laws and Punishment, studied a scroll in his hand.

"You are charged, O Iron Man, with many serious crimes under the Yassa, the Law of the Horde. I will take them in order . . . Tourgai!" he called to the soothsayer, the *shaman.* "Come forward and give witness concerning your charges against the Iron Man!"

The *shaman* shambled forward.

"It is as I wrote to the *Kha Khan,*" he said, "I rode with Prince Juchi when he encountered the army of the Shah in a valley too narrow for maneuver. I counselled him to withdraw and entice the enemy back into more favorable position. Then I heard the Iron Man, riding with the Prince, say, 'If you should flee, O Prince, what would your father say?' The Prince heeded him, flung himself at the head of the *Manguidi,* and charged into the great forces of the Shah, with result that he barely escaped with his life and with the loss of five thousand warriors!"

Alan listened to this, striving to keep his face from showing his anger and astonishment. Chatagai spoke again.

"And touching on this other matter, O Tourgai?" he inquired.

"That is the matter of the Iron Man wrongfully assuming the rank of *gur-khan,*" said Tourgai the *shaman,* "the Iron Man wearing upon his shield and upon his lance banner the Golden Tiger of a *gur-khan* with all men doing homage to it. For those two crimes I beg the Kha Khan to impose the sentence of death upon this arrogant Iron Man!"

Tourgai finished and Chatagai, the Master of Laws and Punishment waved him back.

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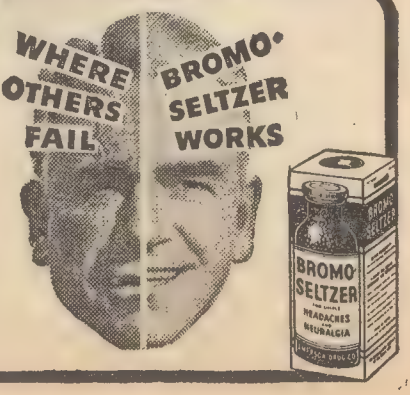


"And now to the even more serious charge," said Chatagai and motioned to someone among the press of Mongol officers nearby.

Alan stared, wondering, as he saw the heavy figure of Marouk, the renegade knight, advance to the foot of the divan.

"Give witness, O Marouk, concerning the matters you have stated against the Iron Man," said Chatagai, through an interpreter.

"IT IS as I have stated," said Marouk, speaking Turkish through the interpreter, "this *Nasrani* knight, purporting to be an ambassador, held treasonable converse in this very house, offering to aid the Shah's governor of Bokhara against Genghis Khan, for a price. What price was paid him I do not know. This Nasrani knight then approached me, offering to gain for me a safeguard from Genghis Khan, for a price of five thousand pieces of gold, at which price I demurred, offering one thousand pieces, to which he agreed. Thereafter he came secretly to Bokhara, with the safeguard, which I have here, demanding his money, which I paid him. But again he held treasonable converse with the governor, offering more gold, to disclose the strength and position of the Mongol forces and the best place to attack them, which the governor refused. Then, being avid for money, he came to me again, stating that he knew where Genghis Khan would abide for the night, and offering to tell me, for a price, so that I might move out with sufficient strength of armed men and fall upon the Mongol Emperor and slay him. Pretending to agree, I paid him the one thousand pieces of gold which he undoubtedly has in his saddle pockets right now, and came, instead and threw myself upon the mercy of the Kha Khan! Send now and see if the money is not in the saddle pockets of the Iron Man!"

Chatagai gave orders to a Mongol officer, who departed. After some minutes he returned, carrying a heavily weighted leathern bag. It was opened and the thousand pieces of gold shown.

The seamed and lined face of Genghis Khan grew dark with anger. The eyes of those Mongol officials about him were hard, cold, accusing and suspicious. Even Chatagai, who had befriended Alan on many occasions, was contemptuous and unfriendly.

"What have you to say, O Iron Man, before I pronounce your doom upon you?" The voice of Genghis Khan, slow, measured, fateful, broke the silence in the hall. "Speak quickly," he continued, "for time presses . . . even now I marshal my forces against Bokhara to begin the attack at dawn, its great walls defended by thirty thousand Seljuk Turks and its citadel held by its stubborn governor!"

"I have little to say, O Kha Khan," Alan's face was stern, "because a very little of the truth is needed to wreck a tissue of lies! Send first for Prince Juchi and Bela Noyan, and enquire of them as to the true words of advice I gave the Prince! Also the true words spoken by the *shaman* Tourgai!"

Chatagai glanced at Genghis Khan. The old leader nodded. A messenger went forth.

Alan spoke again: "And now to one of the other charges—that I assumed the rank of a *gur-khan* by wearing the Golden Tiger insignia upon my shield and lance banner. I wear it also on my ring," he held it up for all men to see, "which belonged to my father and his fathers before him, being not a golden tiger, but a golden leopard, the badge of my house for generations!"

He paused as Genghis Khan pondered on this. The old Khan nodded at last. There came a stir at the entrance. Alan saw Bela Noyan entering. He advanced to the divan, hand on lip and waited. Tourgai, the *shaman* grew pale.

"Tell us, O Bela Noyan," said Chatagai, "the true words of advice spoken by the Iron Man to the Prince Juchi before the battle against the Shah's army in the valley . . . where is Prince Juchi?"

"Prince Juchi," said the Mongol general, "is busy with the *cherbi* (the quartermaster general of the Horde) and commands me to witness for him as well . . . Touching on the true words spoken by the Iron Man, on sighting the forces of the Shah, he said, 'They are in great numbers, O Prince . . . it may be that the entire force of the Shah is advancing upon us . . . and the valley is too narrow

to maneuver our forces!' Tourgai, the *shaman* insisted that the signs were propitious for attack . . . Prince Juchi said, 'If I should flee, what would my father say?' and sent the *Manguidi,* the God-belonging squadron to the charge, following them and hurling himself deep within the enemy lines, where, being unhorsed, and close to death, or capture, he was saved by the bravery of the Iron Man! This is the word of Prince Juchi thy son, O Kha Khan, and my word, and is the truth!"

The *shaman* Tourgai gazed straight ahead, his face impassive. It was the face of a Mongol resigned to death.

The squat heavy figure of Genghis Khan stirred. His voice came slow, unhurried, fateful, his eyes resting upon the *shaman* incurious, as at one already dead.

"What have you to say, O Iron Man, before I pronounce your doom upon you?"

"The fate of one who gives false testimoney before the White Horse Hide," he said, "shall be as a stone dropped in deep water . . . as an arrow fallen among reeds!" and he motioned with his hand.

WHAT followed was shocking to Western eyes. It was taken incuriously and impassively by the Mongols. It being forbidden to shed the blood of a high Mongol, the executioner stepped swiftly behind the *shaman* Tourgai, cord in hand. To Alan it seemed unreal, the silence of it all, a hood thrown over the *shaman's* face, the twisting of the cord, the waiting for slow minutes, the tremor and at last the slumping of the inert body to the floor.

As men carried out the limp form, Chatagai turned again to Alan.

"Touching upon these other matters, what have you to say, O Iron Man!" his voice was unemotional, relentless.

"I have a question to ask," returned Alan. "The Kha Khan prefers his own great white tent to being cramped in a house such as this. At what hour of the night did he change his plan and enter here?" There was quick question and answer in guttural Mongol between Chatagai and the *chiliarch* in command of Genghis Khan's body guard.

"The Kha Khan suddenly decided to occupy this place as a halt for the night as he came to the gates. That was a few minutes after midnight. Why do you ask, O Iron Man?"

"Because, if it is true, as the man Marouk says, that I strove to send him to this place to slay the Kha Khan, I must have known his marching route and plans a full hour before the Kha Khan knew them himself—for Marouk had left the city a full hour *before* midnight, as thousands can witness!"

As the significance of this dawned upon the listeners there grew a stir and low-voiced talk in Mongol. Genghis Khan spoke through the interpreter to Marouk, the renegade knight. That one could not at first find words to explain this, saying at the last, "The governor of Bokhara will testify to the truth of what I have said!" Marouk's voice was trembling and uncertain.

Genghis Khan studied him incuriously for a space.

"It seems that this man also has lied before the White Horse Hide!" he said, slowly and carefully, then, "What, O Iron Man of your dealings with the governor of Bokhara? Speak quickly for the hour grows late and we attack at dawn!"

"There is no need to attack at dawn, O Kha Khan!" said Alan. "The elders of the city will await your coming with the gates open . . . the thirty thousand Seljuk Turks of the garrison left the city before midnight and follow the desert road to rejoin the Shah's forces in the south. They can, even now, be overtaken and captured!"

Genghis Khan raised his head, like a calm old wolf scenting quarry. He gave a low-voiced short command. Officers decorously moved out to carry the orders. It was all done in swift silence, terrible in its certitude. For Genghis Khan had given order that those thirty thousand Turks be set upon and massacred before dawn.

"And," continued Alan as men turned once more to him, "there will be no delay in taking the citadel of Bokhara . . . I have prevailed upon the governor to come with me and surrender the keys . . . on promise that his life shall be spared . . . here he is!" and he beckoned to one of those among his followers, a lean and wiry Turk, who rose, casting the hood off his face, showing the features of the Emir Timur.

A silence settled upon the hall. The old Mongol leader stirred.

"It takes," said Genghis Khan, "a very little truth to tear a web of lies. And this spider who has woven this web . . . he shall be as a stone . . ." he started to speak the words of doom.

"Nay, O Kha Khan, Marouk cannot be doomed to die . . . I gave him your safeguard," said Alan, "sealed with your great seal, promising him life if he should lead the thirty thousand Seljuks out of Bokhara, which he has done."

Genghis Khan shook his head.

"He has cancelled that deed by lying before the White Horse Hide!" he said.

Alan's voice rang out, stubborn, resolute: "Mine own honor is engaged . . . O Kha Khan, I have given my word."

"The man has borne false witness

against you and is unworthy of your mercy!" said Genghis Khan, his voice edged with anger.

"If a dog bite me, do I gain anything by striving to bite the dog?" said Alan. "Nay, I have given my word . . . the Kha Khan himself has said 'Word breaking is hideous in a ruler . . . what shall it be said of a man who makes a promise at dawn and breaks it before nightfall?' "

The wrath of Genghis Khan was a terrible thing to arouse . . . the Mongols looked upon Alan as one already doomed. The old Mongol leader's face was dark with wrath. There was brittle silence and men waited for the storm to break. But the old leader reflected long. At last he spoke: "It shall be as you say, O Iron Man," he said in slow and measured tones, "this treacherous dog of a Marouk has been promised his life . . . he shall have it!" and then he turned to the Uigharian executioner. Men heard the purport of that command and looked curiously at the renegade Marouk. At last the interpreter translated the Mongol into Turkish.

Marouk's face assumed a sickly pallor. He fell to his knees, grovelling, hands raised in plea for mercy. Impassive Mongol guards led him out, still babbling, his cries dying down in the courtyard, only to break out into screams at the last.

For Genghis Khan had commanded that he be blinded and cast forth naked.

The old Mongol leader turned to Alan again.

"I have said that a single man cannot take a city . . . but you have done that thing . . . and for that, you shall be a *gur-khan* of the Horde unto nine generations . . . and each of these pieces of gold here shall be increased by nine and you shall have choice to take nine of the finest jewels yielded by Bokhara!"

"And my embassage, O Kha Khan?" Alan spoke softly.

"The enemies of thy people in Palestine shall be my enemies," said Genghis Khan.

LONE STAR LANDMARKS

by HAROLD WILLARD GLEASON

Texas towns—each name a key
To some tale of gallantry,
Sweet romance, ambition grand,
Salty humor, blood and sand,
Triumph, failure, tears or laughter,
Hallowed for the long hereafter,
Valiant deeds—and dreams, perhaps—
Deathless, now, on Texas maps:
Houston, Bowie, Winchester;
Ranger, Lariat and Spur;
Roosevelt, Taft and Washington;
Dryden, Goldsmith, Tennyson;
Rio Frio, Winter, Frost;
Call, Tell, Twitty; Hye and Cost;
Acuff, Tiffin, Bangs and Shiner;
Charlotte, Margaret, Elmina,
Nancy and Penelope,
Alice, Edna, Emilee,
Bettie, Thalia, Myra, Gail;
Crow, Crane, Turkey, Falcon, Quail;
Quinlan, Corrigan, Moran,
Burke, Muldoon and Millican;
Dobbin, Whiteface; Dawn and Dew;
Clay and Earth (—and Fairland, too!)
Petty, Leakey, Humble, Cross;
Sunset, Star, Goodnight and Doss,
Blanket, Blessing, Paradise,
Happy—under Texas skies!

BLOW THE

Boatswain Putnam, Carpenter Mace, Conway and nine others jumped into the boat safely. Other men, unstable from the rum they had drunk unwisely, jumped short and fell into the sea.

I HAD been master of the Privateer *Nancy* out of Marblehead, but at the time I speak of she was down in a hundred fathoms of the Caribbean under the guns of an English frigate. But I was master of the sloop on which we had been prisoners on our way to Halifax, for during the storm we had escaped from the hold and taken command. I'll come to that part of it later.

And then as bad luck would have it we struck off the Nova Scotia coast. I tell you that is the ugliest sound that ever comes to the ears of the man who goes to sea.

A slow prolonged crunch. I don't know

WINDS SCOTIA!

By LLEWELLYN HUGHES

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

how to describe it. Like a shark's teeth crunching through a man's knee.

We struck, I tell you. And it was storming and snowing and hurling us on to the rocks. All the fury of the North was coming down on us in full tilt. God, man! I tell you that was the worst weather I'd known in all my thirty-one years of life. We were being pounded and battered to pieces. A man ponders on a lot of things in his last few moments. He thinks of his whole lifetime from the days when he was a boy.

The day had broken raw and bitterly cold, the sloop hidden in a veil of spray. It was impossible for us to figure where

we stood other than the awareness that we were off the waste of Nova Scotia. Endless runs of snarling combers drove us to our fate, now burying us deep in the troughs, now lifting us high on the crests, the sloop shuddering violently like a dog shaking water. Only her cargo of deal rails was our salvation even then.

Toward noon the storm was so severe that the men could barely hear my orders when I roared them at the top of my lungs. Man! I tell you that relieving the helmsman was an act of recklessness. Staying there, lashed to the wheel, numbed a man's senses, tore all the strength out of him, left him boneless, then confronted him with the perils of making his way forward again to comparative safety.

We knew what was coming, what was bound to come. Her holds filling, her pumps useless, the vessel had become a water-logged hulk. And toward dark that evening, there was that grinding crunch of her bottom. Men were thrown off their feet. What remained of the bow and its flying horse's head broke away. Great seas came at us and took men away with them. Other men were drowned down below. Those of us who remained managed to scramble aft. Faintly we could hear the security of land maybe some two hundred yards away, land separated from us by a raging hell of foam. In that sea a ship's boat wouldn't last five seconds.

I remember Boatswain Putnam coming up to me reporting through his cupped hands the loss of Griggs, Lowell and Cottrel all of whom had put out on the *Nancy* with me from Marblehead months ago. As a lad I had wrestled Cottrel a score of times on the village green.

"Davy Holmes?" I asked, inquiring about our fourteen-year-old powder boy.

"Haven't seen a sight of him, Joel." It wasn't Cap'n Warren in this hour. There was no sense in formality. We were all in this thing together and a man's Christian name was as good a any other. Putnam studied the boiling waters. "Think one of us could get ashore?"

"No. If there was the least chance of making a rope fast, I'd damn well go myself."

THE wind had a hellish sound, like the howl of a werewolf. And steady. Sustained. A vibrating spear of a sound. Ice began to encrust the vessel, and I ordered men to break it from the passage ways. A huge wave broke over the larboard, stove in the dead lights, started the stern post, flooded the cabin.

At dawn it was snowing so thickly we couldn't see the masthead. The tormented sea, its hills foam-crested, kept lifting the ship from her lodgement, taking her further inland, her cargo of deals alone keeping her afloat. Again we struck—recoiled—and hung. With the boom of a nine-pounder the mainmast jumped out of the step and fell away. The rudder was so violently unshipped that it spun the wheel, killing the helmsman. Combers broke over us, smashing the fabric of the stern, driving men from shelter to the shrouds.

Around two o'clock of the day the wind howl abated a little. From one of the yards I scanned the bleak and rugged coastline bare of landmark or sign of habitation. Foot by foot breakers lifted us nearer land, finally swinging us broadside to the beach about 150 feet off.

To save our lives we couldn't delay any longer. "All right, men," I shouted, trying to encourage them. "We'll drop the boat over. All those with guts enough —follow me."

The one ship's boat left had been preserved like the Holy Grail, and after the ice was hacked away from its rudder, oars and rollocks, we managed to drop it over the lee side.

Boatswain Putnam, Carpenter Mace, Conway and nine others jumped into it safely. Other men, unstable from the rum they had drunk unwisely to keep warm, jumped short and fell into the sea. Only two, Sailmaker Prescott and another man —an English seaman—were hauled in—their drenched clothes a summons to death.

"Cast away," I shouted from the tiller. "All together—every one of you. Let's not be beaten now."

Breakers helped to take us in, sweeping us on to the snow-covered beach, fifteen of us in all, with some food, ropes and an axe. We dragged the boat further up and searched around for shelter until

darkness closed down on us. Nothing. Nothing but wasteland and a driving snow. Making a wind-breaking prop of the boat, we huddled shivering in and about it in a heap as best we could.

I had a tinder-box with me which I managed to keep dry inside my shirt, but there was no wood that offered the remote possibility of catching fire. Sailmaker Prescott was in bad condition along with the Englishman who had fallen into the water. Already their clothing had turned into frozen mail. We could do nothing for them, nothing at all.

Come to that, the rest of us were not much better. "Keep beating your chests, legs and faces," I continually urged and exhorted them. "Sleep—and you'll never come out of it!"

Sometime during the night—I don't know when and it doesn't much matter—Prescott and the English seaman died. Legs became frozen to the knees. Taking off boots and stockings and rubbing bare limbs with snow, torture in itself, did little good. The gale, however, continued to lessen, the dawn revealing a clump of firs about a quarter of a mile inland which offered the hope of better shelter, scant though it was.

"Men still alive on the sloop," Conway yelled. "They're trying to signal us."

Aboard ship, had they known it, they were more fortunate than we were. It was impossible to take them off with the boat, and since they couldn't hear my shouted instructions I made signs to have them heave a line ashore from the jib-boom. At the fifth or sixth try we managed to grab it, made it fast to a rock, and over it six more men reached shore, all of them drunk, one bringing an axe. They said they were the last men on board.

A cask of salt beef washed ashore, also barrels of onions, cloves and lemons. I hoped that more provisions might be available to us when the vessel broke up. With the two axes at our disposal, Conway and Putnam chopped down fir branches and I was finally able to get a small fire started. In the warmth of it the more severely frost-bitten men suffered agonies. Three of them died. We let them lie there until we could dig graves for them. There was no room for sentiment.

Trying to get some sort of system into efforts for our protection I ordered the gathering of all the deal planks that had been washed up on the snowy beach. Cutting the smaller firs into poles, we fastened them horizontally to trees in a sort of oblong, and against these poles we propped the planks at an angle, building a rude kind of Indian tepee, roofless, the snow driving through the chinks which we tried to stuff with branches of fir. We had no nails. What canvas we had was needed for covering the men as they lay exhausted on the bare ground in the shelter. Along the center of it I hacked a trench in which a fire was kept going. A stench was beginning to make itself known, yet no man said a word about it.

The line from the ship still held, and with a further clearing of the weather I went hand over hand back there in search of a pistol and dry powder to try for game, also for a last look around for anything that might come in useful.

I had no luck with pistol or powder, but collected two kettles and an iron cooking pot, some knives and forks, making a pile of them for the return journey. Searching around in the stern quarters I saw a heap of dry canvas we could use—and, in the midst of it, a hand that moved. Putting the canvas aside I found a thin half-frozen body.

The boy, David Holmes!

For the moment I thought he was dead, that I had only imagined the hand to move. But his heart was still beating, and getting a jug from the smashed cabin I forced open his chattering teeth and poured a little rum into his mouth. He gagged, slowly opened his eyes, their blue glazed.

"Cap'n Warren," he tried to say respectfully. "I'm—I'm coming, sir. I—I guess I must have fallen asleep for a minute."

He was too numbed to stir. "We've all abandoned ship, Davy," I said to him. "And now I'm going to take you ashore." I found a piece of rope, sat down, putting my back close to him. "Try to lock your arms around my neck until I can bind this rope about you."

He endeavored to obey, falling asleep from exhaustion as I secured him to my back. That done, and fastening my other

gatherings to my waist, I went over the line back to shore. Warmed at the fire he soon recovered from his torpor and gave promise of suffering no great harm from his nearness to oblivion.

LATE that afternoon the sea permitted four of us to reach the ship by boat. Putnam got a portion of fresh meat preserved by the frost, Conway found a keg of biscuit, a canister of tea, some tallow candles, four casks of salt pork, and a barrel of potatoes. Amongst my discoveries was a find of dubious value, a barrel with a paper label on it marked Apples. Rotted or not, some substance might be found in them, so I took it along. It was our last chance to stock up, for that night the storm resumed its fury, bashed the vessel to hell and gone, scattering the bones of her seaward and up and down the rugged Nova Scotia coast.

I should have told you that I also made another find on the wreck, a find of far less worth—as it seemed to me—than the canister of tea. In what remained of the captain's cabin, locked in a drawer, was a chamois bag of English guineas. I remember being struck by the realization that, under certain conditions, gold was utterly useless to a man, and I would have left it there but for Putnam.

"Nay man," he said to me, "never leave money lying around loose."

So I took it, and that same night during the howling of the gale, all of us taking turns to hack wood for the fire, that purse of gold lay on the floor and no man gave sign of interest in it. One of them, an English sailor named Joshua Lamb, had a comb with which he had proudly shaped his lovelock. He peeled the label off the apple barrel, dried it at the fire, wrapped it around the comb, and blew songs and chanties through it. Mighty sweet music in the storm and desolation, I can tell you, and a few of us tried to sing to it.

At that time I had cause to curse all Englishmen to hell, yet I must confess that I was glad Joshua Lamb was along with us; for he was a waggish cove, brimful of cheery endurance. That night, for instance, in the midst of groaning and weeping and stinking men on both sides of him, he had Putnam and Giles Burdock in stitches as he spun a yarn appropriate to the shrieking gale.

"Why it blew so 'ard," he said in his London accent, "it would 'ave blown the captain's 'air off if the mate hadn't 'eld it on." . . . " 'Arf a minute, says I, who 'eld the mate's 'air on." . . . "Why, the bosun, he 'eld the mate's 'air on." . . . " 'Arf a minute, I says, who 'eld the bosun's 'air on?" . . . "Why, an old man who was a passenger, he 'eld the bosun's 'air on." . . . "Now look 'ere, I says, it's no use you going on like that. Who 'eld the old gentleman's 'air on?" . . . "He didn't 'ave any 'air, he says. He was bald-'eaded."

Close to the fire, Davy Holmes asleep beside me, my arm around his shoulder, I looked back down the marching seas to the circumstances of our pass. I could see the sunny afternoon when we put out from Marblehead, the town lined up on the wharf to bid us farewell and good luck. Ah, I tell you the *Nancy* was as saucy a brig as ever went to sea; 100 tons, square-sailed, very sharp built and friezed with blue and yellow paint, two windows in her stern and carrying 10 carriage and 12 swivel guns.

Off the Neck the next morning we hauled the anchor and shaped a course for the Virginia Capes, intending to keep within range of friendly river ways into which we could run if too strongly challenged.

The voyage was without incident until we were off the Chesapeake where after a sharp engagement before she lowered her colors we took the brigantine *St. Kitts* out of Bristol, England. Laden with ninety pipes of Malmsey, thirty casks of brandy, eighty-eight of sugar, a quantity of raisin and English crockery, she was a prize indeed.

If we wanted our share of her worth I had to libel her in an American court, that being the law of privateering. So we resolved for Baltimore, the prize sailing ahead of us with our own men in command. The court proceedings lasted a month. All too often privateersmen had to fight to get what was due them for their victory in sea battle. Persons in high places saw profits for themselves by fine trickery. Many captures were declared

"not to be a prize" by ruling that such and such a matter was not in order, that a captain's papers had some irregularity in them of a minor nature. In this particular case we had to take an appeal, a long litigation, and costly, so that you might say we got nothing at all for our daring and our wounds.

We were a disgruntled lot of men when we put out again, risking the lairs of the Chesapeake until we cleared Cape Charles and stood for the open sea.

Yet worse was to come.

Off Martinique we had picked up another prize, debating among ourselves where to take and best dispose of her. After the fight off the Chesapeake we'd been forced to replace our dead and wounded, and amongst our new crew was a Frenchman of shady pursuits. He claimed he was well versed with the waters of the Lesser Antilles and said we would find ready buyers for our prize in Fort de France, a den of cut-throats and pirates. It was a French possession and the French king had lately concluded a treaty of alliance with the United States of America.

Thinking well of it I fetched the *Nancy* into Fort de France, our capture running before us, her English flag at surrender. We got a fair deal there, provisions and ammunition in exchange for our taken silk and plate; after which I put out again during a sweltering afternoon in late October. A fiery sun was going down, and tacking into what little wind favored us some intuition warned me to clear the island before morning.

The breeze, what there was of it, fell away to nothing until, finally, we were becalmed. Around midnight I was lying on the quarterdeck catching a wink of sleep when Helmsman Tom Conway shook my shoulder.

"Clap your glass on that, Cap'n Joel."

ON the ocean rim a big red moon was slowly rolling and across it a sail was blackly etched. I kept the glass on her for a long time until I was sure.

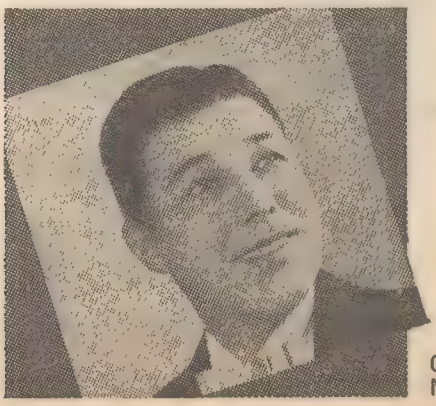
"She's a king's frigate!"

The yellowing moon was beginning to show the presence of other ships of war. We were no match for one frigate, let alone two or three of them. Calling all hands I told them that the Britishers might be after the pirates in Fort de France, and for that reason we might escape un-noticed. Only the dawn and a wind would give the answer.

Luck promised to be with us. During the night a breath of air began to belly our top-gallants and the morning light showed Martinique to be well abaft of us. It also showed that two frigates had command of the waters, a smaller vessel along with them, a sloop by the look of her, also flying the ensign.

The nearest man 'o war immediately showed her intentions by giving us a bow gun, the two other ships standing clear. I ordered the guns manned and prepared to give battle.

Now it doesn't do to dwell on past misfortunes. They're behind a man, over and done with. Rather let him gird his loins to meet whatever fortunes lie ahead. Yet a man can't forget when sturdy comrades fight to bloody death alongside him in their country's honor, for their faces reappear and reappear again, even when howling snowstorms beset his thoughts.



"Fit for a King"

says GEO. McQUEEN

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We fought to the end against a superior enemy, inflicting what damage our nine-pounders could do until our last remaining gun was silent. The *Nancy* was going fast, great holes in her waterline. I gave the order to abandon ship.

"Get the wounded into the boats first. The rest of you afterwards."

The Royal Navy men gave out with cheers for our stand as we rowed alongside, and as prisoners of war we were transferred to their sloop of eighty tons, a flying black horse in her head, which, so we heard, was taking us to far-off Halifax on a charge of piracy. As I went aboard her planks I looked back and saw the last of the *Nancy,* her flag yet flying above her dead and dying, her waist blood-washed, wreckage and scum finally covering her like a blanket.

No, a man can't erase a thing like that from his memory, even when he is confronted with perils far more dire, slow starvation in a snow-swept wilderness without shelter or succor. So play on your comb, Englishman, and give us cheer with a tune.

In the hold of that sloop we had been thirty-three in all, eighteen from the *Nancy,* the rest taken from other Yankee ships. In that fetid confinement, rats fought to share our food. We snatched them up in our hands, flung them savagely against the timbers, but couldn't kill them off. Except for the clothes we wore we had no covering of any kind, and as the sloop began to roll into colder waters our sufferings increased day by day. My heart ached for young Davy Holmes who bore his hardships without complaint, showing a courage which none of us could match.

Although the food was scarcely fit to stomach, we hungered more and more for it as the weather grew colder. Scummy and cold as it was it gave, or seemed to give, a little warmth to our insides. Above us the hatch was left open a few inches for a breath of pure air, widened only when the grub was let down to us at the end of a rope.

From the start it had been my intention to attempt a seizure if the opportunity ever presented itself, and it was on that daily lowered rope that I kept building my hopes. Yet weeks had gone by without my seeing any way to take advantage of it, and we were now shivering with cold, our muscles growing weaker from want of use and nourishment.

The one source of information as to our position came from the seaman who dropped our food down. Always gruff spoken, in the past few days his talk was thick as from rum. From that I judged that discipline on board was getting out of hand, though my wildest thoughts could not have guessed the cause of it.

Off the dangerous coast of Nova Scotia, the marching seas increased in severity, the sloop seesawing in the long swells. At any hour the hatch would be battened over us—not for our preservation, but to prevent the sweep of seas into the hold, further threatening the safety of the vessel.

That day when our two buckets of gruel came down I gave a pull to the rope, making it appear a clumsy accident, and it coiled into the hold. The seaman cursed us, saying he would report the matter.

But now that we had the rope we seemed no better off with it than before. In the hope of fetching a loop of it around some purchase on the hatch cover I kept trying—all of us tried in turn—and failed. Hourly the storm was growing worse. It grew too dark to see the aperture of the hatch, and now, to a man, we felt that the ship must founder, taking us down with her helplessly trapped below.

A larger stream of cold air came down from the hatch, spray stinging our upturned faces. "Ahoy, down there," a voice hailed us. A callous inquiry followed. "Is Captain Warren still alive amongst you?"

"He is," I answered. "Who wants to know?"

"I'm the second mate. We need your help, Captain. There's trouble on board. Give me your word of parole and I'll let down a ladder for you."

Freedom! The irony of it! At last the opportunity to seize a vessel already doomed! "Damn you!" I cursed him. "In a storm of this sort you've *got* to free us—if you've a spark of humanity left in you."

"Bring three of your stoutest men along."

"It's all of us or none," I challenged

him. "I'll give my paroled word on that, or not at all."

The let-down ladder was his unspoken agreement to that, and on deck I tried to get the measurement of him in the darkness; a smallish oil-skinned figure of a man.

"Where's your captain?" I had to shout above the roaring of the gale.

"In his cabin." His tone was bitter and afeared. "He's been no more use to us than if he lay at the bottom of the sea."

"Sick?"

"Drunk."

"Where's your mate?"

"Washed overboard."

Followed by Putnam and Cottrel I slid into the waist, seas pouring across it, raging through the scuppers. I saw that the vessel was in worse shape than I had imagined. Something was cracking like a swivel gun aloft.

"What's that canvas above us?" I hollered to the second.

"Fore-top-gallant and goose wings of the foresail."

Again I cursed him. "Fetch them down, man. Bring her under bare poles."

"The men refuse to go up there. They can't hold to the yards."

"I've got men who'll go up there," I roared at him. "Yankee sailormen—not puling Britishers." Boiling with rage at the condition of the ship I had something to attend to first. Clinging to the ladder I reached the quarterdeck and burst open the door of the cabin. The captain lay on his settee, his mouth loose from drink, empty rum jars rolling about the floor. "You drunken slob!" I damned him. "Leaving us to perish. In God's name, who made you master of a ship!"

He fumbled for a pistol. I snatched it from him, smashed it over his head. At the wheel I peered at the compass of the binnacle, gave orders to the half-frozen helmsman, then, pistol in hand, took the vessel over, her destiny now at my command.

IT was too late. Impossible to get her remaining canvas down. Impossible to get any bearing. And that same night—well you already know what happened.

Those, then, were my thoughts as I sat beside the fire in our deal-plank shelter, young Holmes asleep against my shoulder, Joshua Lamb playing chanties on his hair-comb.

The cruelty of the storm kept us in the shelter four days and nights, during which time more men died from one cause or another, only small concern being felt for them due to our own extremities.

Little more in the way of provisions had washed up ashore, and by careful rationing I saw that our store wouldn't last us beyond a month. To our great disappointment the barrel supposed to contain apples was found to be a frozen mass of tarred oakum which could serve only as kindling to light stubborn logs. To my dying day I'll give thanks that we didn't use much of it so wastefully.

As the weather relented a little we found game tracks in the snow, but we had no fire arms and nothing with which to make a trap. Carpenter Mace and I made exploratory trips, gone all day and so spent in the deep snow that we were lucky to reach the shelter before dark. The condition of all of us steadily grew worse. How could it have been otherwise? We began to lose sense of the passing days and weeks.

I must confess that it was the Englishman Joshua Lamb who gave voice to what had long been in my thoughts. Always a hopeful little tyke, one night he launched into a singsong requiem on his passing.

"Whatever 'appened to Josh Lamb?" he mourned. "You know, him as used to dance the 'ornpipe. Him as used to take pretty Sally Murphy to see the King pass by. Why'e died of starvation trying to eat the North Pole. Did 'e?" he defended himself pugnaciously. "Not bloody likely, mate! Josh Lamb 'ad enough of that sort of grub. 'E set out to look for a better place. And that," he announced to all of us "is what I'm going to do come tomorrow morning—if I 'ave to go it alone."

"You're right," I agreed. "And you won't go alone. We'll all get out of here—head south in the ship's boat."

The decision was physic even to those whose condition wouldn't permit them to attempt the rigors of it. We'd become hard men, I'm sorry to say; hard of heart. It was a case of survival for the

fittest, or those of us that remained were bound to become like the weakest.

In the morning we examined the upturned boat, scooping her out from the snow and ice. Battered by the seas, sprung by the frosts, at first sight it seemed that every seam was open. It wouldn't stay afloat five minutes.

I remember running as hard as I could back to the shelter. I remember that an icy fear ran through me as I pounced on a small barrel and examined its contents. I remember the relief that ran through me from head to toe.

About half of the tarred oakum was still available.

We hacked it into small pieces. We boiled them in hot snow water until the stuff was pliable. We carried the boat inside the shelter and kneaded the pitch into the seams until we had all of them calked. The work had to be thorough, lasting days, and in that time four more men died, their eyes gazing to the last on the patched-up argosy that might have borne them to safety.

Our resolve made and determined upon, necessaries for the voyage lent our wits powers of invention. Carpenter Mace contrived a mast for the boat. Using a crude needle made from the handle of a spoon, Prescott turned a canvas into a sail. Dead men's clothing had been carefully saved to be shared by the survivors, and from what parts could be spared feet covering and crude moccasins were fashioned.

Just six of us remained: Putnam, Mace, Prescott, Lamb, Davy Holmes and myself. None of us had any illusions that we could survive if a new storm blew up. The first day when the wind was in our favor, we held a prayer meeting, then all six of us pushed off, taking our remaining provisions with us, our gold, and the far more precious tinder-box; for without help and lacking the means of making a fire meant the end of us, storm or no storm.

After a voyage of some forty miles along a desolate coast we put ashore opposite the first hill we thought we might climb in order to give us survey of the the ascent and spied two shacks about surrounding wastes. Putnam and I made half a mile down in a valley that wound seaward. We signaled our discovery to the others below, then made our way down to investigate.

Both shacks were abandoned. Apparently they had been used by fishermen during the months of more clement weather for the curing of cod. In each shack there were five brine casks. All were empty. As we re-climbed the hill we passed winterberry bushes and ate hungrily of the red fruit, marking the place for our comrades.

From the hilltop I hollered to them, telling them to sail the boat further along shore, beyond the hill, where they could more easily reach the valley. I told them to beach and bring the provisions with them, and that evening we took shelter in one of the shacks, building a fire in it from the broken-up brine barrels.

FOR ALL our efforts and toil in voyaging this far we were no better off than before, yet in one respect fortune had now brought us its small favors; for early the next morning a blizzard swept down from the north-west, howling mockingly around us, keeping us penned in there except for quick dashes to the other shack where boards were torn away to provide fuel for our fire around which we huddled. Without shelter we must have perished.

And there we were again forced to remain for three or four nights and days—I am not certain how many, because one day was as long as a week—our gallant John Prescott dying quite suddenly, his lungs seeming to collapse.

And always that hellish wind in a steady howl. No let-up at all. It maddened us so much, that if one man spoke to the other—

"The wind blew so 'ard it would 'ave blown the captain's 'air off if the mate hadn't 'eld it on." . . . "'Arf a minute, I says, who 'eld the mate's 'air on?"

"Shut up, you blasted King's man!" Carpenter Mace threatened him.

We had been getting on each other's nerves for a long time. I tell you that by now we were not far removed from savages, ready to fly at one another's throats on the slightest provocation, and sometimes on no provocation at all. I did my best to keep some sort of order,

governing my own temper, but the truth is I was not much better than the worst; and the worst was Carpenter Mace.

"All right, matey," Joshua Lamb told him. "Suppose I give you a bit of a tune instead."

"Shut up, I tell you—or I'll cleave your skull clean through with this axe."

That brought me into it. "Quit it—will you—or take me into account. It's bad enough as it is without—"

"Bloody Englishman. If it wasn't for him, and the likes of him, we wouldn't be stranded on this God-forsaken coast."

"Calm down, John," I tried to pacify him. "Get hold of yourself. He's in the same fix as the rest of us—isn't he?"

"Yes, and I ain't snivelin' and snarlin' about it, either." The little tyke had plenty of spunk in him, and his glazed blue eyes were blazing like sapphires. Then he said, "I was just beginning to admire some of you Yankee buggers. I was beginning to swear to myself I'd sooner join 'ands with you than fight you again—but for the likes of 'im."

The look on the carpenter's face was frightful to see. I leaped to my feet. "Put that axe down!" I shouted. Paying no attention he started to swing it and I knocked him insensible with my fist.

That's the way it was with us, I regret to say.

When the blizzard and its cursed wind finally relented, dwindling almost to a calm, we found that ice had formed all along the coast, presenting an appalling problem for sailing on in the boat. With back-breaking efforts, driven by desperation, we got it into open water and rowed on, now without a helping sail. The severe frost had again cracked the seams, and two men in turn constantly had to bail with our cooking pots. After a short voyage even that was hopeless.

Sick of heart, I gave the only order that offered us a bare chance. "Pull as far through the ice as possible and scramble ashore. Leave the boat. It's of no further use to us."

We were just able to make it over ice that would support us, reaching a bleak shore with no shelter in sight other than the forest about a mile inland. There we managed to get a fire going, the weather staying fair but cold. The last of the salt meat had long since gone and we were left with not much more than what remained of our tallow candles. These I rationed to an inch per man per day.

The following morning toward noon poor Davy Holmes became violently sick after munching his share of tallow, and yet as he lay there retching he had sharper ears than any of us. Suddenly he sat up, his wasted young face twisted in agony, his eyes feverish in their suspense.

"Hark!" he said. "Listen! The—the barking of a dog!"

God in Heaven! it *was* the barking of a dog! The unbelievable sound of it turned all of us into frozen postures of listening. Then we *saw* the dog. Food! Life-giving food if we could only entice him to us in a pretense of friendship. But the dog remained at a distance, still barking shrilly.

And then came a sight which I shall never forget. Two Indians with rifles ghosted through the trees, probably having seen the smoke from our fire and coming to investigate. They, too, stayed their distance, staring at us. And well they might, for we were a breed of man and boy the like of which they had not seen before; bloated of belly while cadaverous of visage, frost bitten skin showing purple through out tattered clothes, eyes half-closed from snow blindness.

We tried to explain our plight to them, the Indians jabbering in reply, the dog barking incessantly.

"Come—back—soon," one of them said.

They turned, started running, the dog following them. They had appeared so suddenly, disappeared again in the twinkling of an eye, that for my part I was convinced it could have been no more than an hallucination of a diseased brain. I continued to believe so, all of us too awed to discuss it, until—as suddenly—they returned, bringing other Indians with them. They also brought smoked venison and seal oil, vigorously refusing to let the meat get into our hands. First they gave us a little oil to swallow, then melted snow in a cooking pot, boiling the meat in it, allowing us a small portion of it at intervals.

Putnam and Mace wept from gratitude which in their weakness they were unable to express by word or sign. Davy Holmes

could scarcely still his sobbing long enough for him to gulp the seal oil into his retching stomach. As for Joshua Lamb, he was now plainly raving.

"'Arf a minute," he said, pointing at one of the Indians, his face grimacing. "Who 'eld the bosum's 'air on?" . . . "Why an old man who was a passenger . . ."

SOME DAY I'll go back and find those Nova Scotia Indians. I'll take wampum with me, and beads and lots of other things to gladden their eyes. Not that such a thing could ever repay their kindnesses, for they took us to their village, clothed and sheltered us, tended to us as though we were their own, until health and strength gradually returned to all five of us.

More than that, they helped us foil the British. For in the spring the garrison at Halifax nearby—in some way or other—got wind of escaped prisoners of war in the vicinity and sent searching parties through the woods. With crafty knowledge the Indians safely led us to Musquod Island off the coast, one of their hiding places in tribal warfare.

And it was there that we began to get on one another's nerves again, Davy Holmes alone taking no sides. For it got to be the second week in May and Joshua Lamb had been gone from us almost a month.

"We'll never see him again, nor our money," Carpenter Mace kept taunting me. "A Royal Navy man, wasn't he? Sworn to the service of his damned King George. Why should he return now that he's back with his own? Tell me that?" he swore at me.

Putnam agreed with him. "I think your judgment was at fault, Joel. I don't know whatever came into your head. We'll be stuck here until the end of the war. And God knows when that will be."

Weary of their everlasting badgering, I was commencing to believe that they were right, and that in trusting Joshua Lamb I had proved myself a fool.

And yet there had been no other way, as it seemed to me. Ever since reaching Musquod Island our one thought, our one hope and prayer, had been to find ways and means to cross the wide entrance to the Bay of Fundy and so reach the Massachusetts mainland and home. To do so we needed something far more substantial than a canoe or rowboat. We needed a seaworthy vessel able to withstand a rub with high seas. There was only one near-enough place to procure such a boat. The British fort at Halifax.

A score of times during our experiences in the Nova Scotia ice-bound wilderness I had wanted to throw away those cumbersome English guineas. And now, in the end, I had entrusted them to Josh Lamb to purchase a likely vessel for us. He alone dared show himself in Halifax. He had the wits to account for his escape from the wrecked British sloop. His courage was unquestioned.

I can't say what made me trust him. Comradeship in a hellish ordeal makes men kin, pattern of the same cloth and nationality. And maybe it was something he had once said about wanting to join hands with us in our struggle against the hated Crown. For some reason I had taken to the scrappy little tyke, risking a chance on him, since there seemed nothing else to do.

Well, he had been gone almost a month, as I say, and it looked as if I had guessed wrong and that Putnam and Mace had every cause to complain against me, for the little cuss could lead the British to our hiding place and have our necks in a noose hanging from a gallows for piracy.

And then, one fine morning, a sail came up off the west point of the densely wooded island. She tacked into our cove and rattled her anchor chain. A ketch, she was, an old fore-and-aft rigger, small mizzen set forward of the rudder port. And aboard her as her crew and captain was Joshua Lamb, standing on her foredeck, playing a jew's harp instead of his comb. And as it twanged across the water I tell you it was the sweetest music I ever heard, and that's a fact. And when he came ashore in a small boat even Carpenter Mace hugged him, all of us slapping him around for pure joy.

"Whatever 'appened to little Josh Lamb?" he piped. "You know, 'im from London Town as used to dance the 'ornpipe. What 'appened to 'im? Why he sided with the cause of Liberty, mar-

ried a lass from Boston, and lived to a ripe old age in the United States of America."

We roared with laughter at his antics. We grasped his hand and kept pounding him on the back until we almost killed him.

Ah, I tell you that was a happy day for us, a happy end to all our travails; and there's little more to tell except for one last incident that gave us a bad half hour.

We were at sea then. The ketch was making hard weather as bravely as her old bones could hold together, heeling under a westerly breeze, Putnam at the wheel turn. His black hair and whiskers had turned gray. None of us looked the same. Davy, up in the masthead that morning, appeared older than his years.

We were on the alert for any suspicious sail, for these waters were replete with dangers and our escape from a hanging or a prison ship was by no means yet sure.

"Sail to larboard!" Davy shouted from the maintop.

We had no weapons with which to offer battle at sea, and no spyglass. Searching anxiously, my eyes finally made out a sail on the horizon. Under a full spread of canvas the ship was making to cross our bow.

I studied her until there was no mistake of her identity. "She's an English brigantine of war," I said, hating to give them the bad news.

AT THIRTY rods or so there was a puff from one of the Englishman's gun ports and a ball came across our bow. For the first time that I can remember Josh Lamb gave way to despair. "We're for Halifax, mates," he groaned. "After all we've been through, we ain't bound for the United States of America. We're for Halifax and a prison ship."

So far the brigantine hadn't shown her colors for some odd reason or other, contrary to the rule of the sea. Now she ran them up—and the shrill voice of Davy Holmes pierced our exultant shouting.

"She's an American! A Yankee privateer! Look, Cap'n Joel," he screamed. "Isn't she a grand sight! Did you ever see anything so beautiful, Cap'n Joel? The American flag!"

Shortening canvas and coming down on us in a picturesque sweep of sailing, the blue water parting white from her prow, the captured British vessel swished toward us broadside, men lining her poop, their gray-whiskered captain hailing us.

"What ketch is that and where bound?"

I recognized him on the instant. So did Putnam and Mace. He was Cap'n Timothy Rogers of Salem, one of New England's noted privateersmen.

He peered at me as he went by, then bellowed across the short distance. "By Godfrey! It's Joel Warren! Why Joel, we had it you were taken off Martinique and sunk."

In as few words as possible I shouted our adventures back at him and he roared, "What sort of a privateer have you got under you now, Cap'n Joel?"

"Compliments of His Majesty King George," I laughed. "Bound for Marblehead."

The distance was widening between us, but Timothy Rogers had a bellow you could hear a mile away.

"They'll ring the bells for you, Joel. They'll be lighting bonfires. And there's quite a bit of money waiting there for you. That prize you took into Baltimore. Appeal sustained. Good luck to you—and a fair wind home."

N'Tinkeno came within two paces of Bannerhall and stopped. Then he thrust the snake forward with a grunt.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER L. THOMAS

THE GABOON VIPER

By

WALT SHELDON

YOU'VE heard all these tales about snakes: hoop snakes who take their tails in their mouths and roll; cobras who spit with deadly accuracy into your eye at so many yards; snakes that milk cows—and so on. Most of them are sheer nonsense. But often there is some truth behind an unscientific assertion, and there is one thing about snakes I had never believed until I met the bleary-eyed old derelict that night in a West African coast town cafe.

You are apt to meet bleary-eyed derelicts in such places. This one drifted over to my table, seeming to emerge from the low-hanging smoke a few minutes after I had sat down.

"Mind?" he said, looking at the empty chair.

I said, "No." I was killing time until the arrival of the mail boat for the interior. And being a talker of little discrimination I will talk—and enjoy talking—to anyone.

This fellow was dressed in dirty whites; he needed a shave, but some curious vanity had prompted him to wax his mustache very carefully. He was about fifty, stocky.

I bought him a gin. He started in on a story (as I'd been sure he would) and for the first minute or so I listened in only a half-attentive way. But presently I found myself following the thing rather closely. Next thing I knew I had all but forgotten my surroundings.

The yarn was obviously his own experience—but he told it in the third person, and that could have been either modesty or shame. At first, I wasn't sure which. He kept staring down into his gin as he talked, as though he were watching all of it happen again there on the clear, oily surface of the stuff. . . .

AT FIRST it seemed that Preston Karey and Boardman Bannerhall, the Third, were brought together in Stanleyville by a wise and gracious Providence. Each had a bit of what the other had not, and this was particularly true in the matter of money.

Preston Karey was the one who had no funds. A series of bad breaks had brought it about: Arabs stealing his last ivory haul; The Fly giving his oxen *nagana*—sleeping sickness—on his last gun-smuggling trip, and the private hunting party for which he'd come to Stanleyville now cancelling his engagement for no given reason. Although Karey could guess the reason. He had a great interest and sympathy in natives; he could get more out of them by treating them as *men*, than the road bosses could by treating them as dogs, or the missionaries by treating them as children. Now a good many of Preston Karey's fellow whites resented this. The word was spread about that Karey was a "black lover." Bound to cause trouble.

But when Boardman Bannerhall, the Third, was ready to take his hunting trip no other guides were immediately available. Bannerhall liked things immediate, once he had made up his mind. And why not?—he could pay to have it that way. He invited Karey to dinner on the screened verandah of the Hôtel de la Regance.

"I don't know how long I want to be gone in the bush," said Bannerhall, who had now been in Africa just long enough to eschew the term "jungle." "Until I get tired of it, I guess."

"Any particular kind of game you're after?" Karey asked.

Bannerhall leaned back, and the rattan chair creaked. He weighed nearly three hundred pounds. It might have been said that there wasn't an ounce of flesh on him—it was all fat. He had baby eyes, baby lips, baby cheeks. He'd inherited his money. He said, "Oh, the usual stuff. Elephants. Lions. Buffalo. I want to take as many feet of film as possible. I'll show you how to operate the cameras. They're sixteen millimeter; you won't have any trouble."

Karey, of course, didn't get the significance of the cameras just then. He nodded. "Well, we'll do as well as anyplace in the southern Luvua country. We can boat it down there and then branch off into the K'Nuana Forest. As long as you don't care where we go, I might as well take advantage of it. I'd like to visit a tribe I've heard about for a long time, but never seen. The Atambi." He smiled, and a number of new wrinkles appeared in his lean face. "I have two reasons for wanting to find them."

"Two reasons?" asked Bannerhall.

"Yes. First, I'm genuinely interested in all tribal customs and I want to witness a rather odd ceremony the Atambi are supposed to have. Second, no white man has ever reached them before, and to get to them won't at all hurt my reputation as a guide."

Bannerhall shrugged. "It's up to you. All I want to do is a little shooting, and get some pictures of the action."

At that point it seemed to both parties that a fortunate and pleasant deal had been made.

Karey began to sense the trouble as the expedition got under way, however. They started south of the falls. While Karey was loading the flat-bottomed river boat, juggling all the cramped space to make it come out even, several porters showed up with four cases of scented toilet soap. Karey laughed, supposed someone had made a mistake, and stowed half a case. Then, when Bannerhall found out that his four cases of toilet soap—scented—weren't aboard, he fumed and sputtered. What the devil was he supposed to wash with? He went to the bow, took a bucket bath and sulked for twenty-four hours.

By that time they were well on their way, pushing against the sluggish, brown current, and already in scattered jungle. Karey noticed that Bannerhall washed his hands about every hour. Whenever he got

a drink from Ofuala, the hunch-backed mess-boy, he stared at the glass suspiciously and wiped it off again before drinking. After using his handkerchief thus, he would put it away to be laundered.

In Bannerhall's very cleanliness, Karey sensed something unclean. He couldn't explain to himself too clearly just what he did sense. He shrugged it off.

THEIR first game was a herd of hippo which Karey sighted among a bed of reeds at a broad, flat turn of the river. They were downwind, and Karey maneuvered the boat to within shooting distance, then handed Bannerhall the Martini-Henry repeater loaded, ready to shoot. Bannerhall missed miserably. The hippos plunged, and it looked as though all of them would disappear on the far shore when one unpredictable fellow suddenly turned and charged the boat.

"Good grief!" said Bannerhall. He stared at the two piggish periscopes of eyes, and the wedge of water flowing back from the bulky push of the animal. He yelled suddenly—it was almost a scream—and then in a panic tried to rush to the other side of the boat and escape. Two of the porters grabbed him. Karey, meanwhile, picked up the Martini-Henry, aimed, fired, and sent a heavy caliber slug into the beast. It kept charging, but fortunately missed the boat and went past the stern.

Karey turned then to look at Bannerhall. The fat playboy's eyes shone with panic. He was thrashing and struggling in the grips of the two blacks. He was yelling: "Get your filthy hands off me! Karey—do something! Get these filthy apes off me!"

Karey spoke swiftly to them in interior Congolese, which they more or less understood no matter what their local dialects, and they released Bannerhall.

"Shoot them! Get rid of them! Get them out of here!" the fat man babbled.

Karey said quietly, "Listen, Bannerhall, they were only trying to save your life. They thought you were going to jump overboard. Frankly, I think you were, too."

Bannerhall turned slowly to face the hunter. He held his infantile lips tight for a moment, and then in a low, acid voice he said, "I can't stand their dirty hands on me. I can't stand anything dirty."

Karey was on the point of saying that skin color didn't have much to do with dirt, but he saw that Bannerhall was relaxed a little now, and decided not to make an issue of it. He glanced beyond the boat. The hippo had plunged into shallow water and died there, before he could find deeper water and disappear. Karey, to change the subject, gestured at the carcass. "We might as well pull up and butcher it. Hippo meat's very fine-grained and delicious. Not at all fleshy like rhino, or water-buck—"

"We're not going to *eat* that slimy creature, are we?" asked Bannerhall, aghast. Then he shook his head. "You and the blacks can if you want to. I'll stick to canned goods. Meanwhile—" he turned and looked at the dead hippo and frowned— "I wonder if we could get some moving pictures."

"Sure," said Karey. "Why not?"

Bannerhall put a plump finger to his chin. "I suppose it'll float. And we have enough ropes to tow it. For that matter we could do the whole thing there in the shallow water."

"What whole thing?" asked Karey.

"Re-stage the shooting," said Bannerhall calmly. "We can have the blacks float it with skins, then tow it so it seems to be charging. I can stand over there on the sand spit and you can take the pictures from the boat. Later on we can get a close-up of my pulling the trigger, and I'll splice that in—"

Karey simply opened his mouth, let his jaw hang, and said nothing. He said not another word as he went through the whole ridiculous business of faking the killing of the hippo for the cameras—with Bannerhall as the killer.

There was not much harmony between the two men after that. It seemed as though they had been born hostile to each other. I've heard witch doctors explain that in every man there is the spirit of a certain animal, and sometimes natural enemies just come together. May even be something to that.

Well, Bannerhall, after the incident of the hippo, became increasingly nasty with

the porters. Ofuala, the mess boy, bore most of it. He was usually handiest. If there was the slightest speck on the serving tray Bannerhall would rave and swear at the poor black. Threaten to strike him, although Karey usually managed to stop that in time. Then at night when the twelve porters gathered in the bow of the boat to sing Bannerhall would often make them stop because he didn't like the noise. The porters had been brought along from downriver because it was uncertain just what help would be available when they got to the K'Nuana Forest. They glared back at Bannerhall dumbly, and they muttered among themselves.

KAREY didn't like this at all. He was taking the porters into a strange and, to them, fearful country; he would need them in a cooperative mood if he was to reach the stamping grounds of the Atambi. He had seen too many desertions; he had seen the ant-picked skeletons of white men whose porters had deserted them.

They finally reached the K'Nuana Forest some weeks later. They left the boat and set off into the jungle. Karey kept the blacks going by jokes, oratory, and a kind of personal magnetism. He wasn't a large man, but he had a very compact frame and a quick, decisive way of moving. And a quiet, unhurried voice. He inspired confidence.

He maneuvered constantly to keep Bannerhall and the blacks separated from each other. To keep accidents that might infuriate the stout playboy from happening. Bannerhall infuriated might also be Bannerhall pretty-damn-foolish.

But in spite of Karey's efforts something did happen. It was just one of those chance encounters which may come any time in the jungle—

It happened in deep jungle. They were well into it, now: thick, green jungle which was mostly hot and dark. Only occasional lances of sunlight managed to penetrate the leaves, creepers and branches overhead. The air was thick; you felt a deep breath might drown you. In the sparse light shafts jungle dust danced and gave them substance. Sweat glistened on the porter's backs. The insects were merciless.

They followed a faint game trail; most of it was choked with foliage and the porters hacked the way with bush-knives. Late the day it happened they still hadn't found a clearing, so, in a relatively thin spot, some of the porters began to hack one. Bannerhall sat on a fallen log, mopped his brow, panted, and lighted a cigar. Other blacks began to set up the tents and start a cooking fire.

Karey, meanwhile, busied himself by jotting in his notebook. He usually kept terse journals of his trips—he had vague notions of writing a book about Africa some day. This evening he wrote:

Should contact Atambi soon. Definitely snake country here: saw several species today; one mamba in a tree. Don't think Bannerhall noticed. Don't think he'll be happy when he learns why I want to visit the Atambi. Anxious to find out if Atambi use poisonous or non-poisonous varieties in their ceremony—if, indeed, the reports of their ceremony are true. . . .

There was suddenly a scream of terror.

Karey brought his head up. Bannerhall's tent had already been pitched and Bannerhall apparently had stepped into it. Right now he was stepping out of it. Backwards, and in a hurry. His eyes were as big as clock dials and he was pointing with a fat, trembling finger. His jowls were green. *"In there!"* he gasped.

Karey jumped toward the tent, at the same time worrying his Mauser from its holster. Bannerhall apparently hadn't even thought to draw his own pistol. Karey looked inside. There was a snake in there. It was thick-bodied, sand-colored, and had bright, oblong markings along the back, and little, triangular markings on the side. It was perhaps five feet long —difficult to tell exactly because it was in a half-coil now, weaving its head about in a bewildered way, and spitting its forked tongue in and out rapidly. It had a small, horny protuberance on its nose.

Karey aimed quietly for an instant, then pulled the trigger. The big slug mashed the reptile's head. It thrashed about, dying.

"Great gods, that was close!" Bannerhall stared. "Was—was it poisonous?"

"Yes," said Karey, "I'm afraid it was.

Quite dangerous. Some have recovered from its bite, but not many. It's a Gaboon viper—related to the rhino snake, but marked differently. They like this sort of deep forest." He turned and smiled just a bit sardonically at Bannerhall. "Do you want to re-stage the killing and have me photograph you shooting the snake?"

Bannerhall didn't even answer. He pressed his lips together and then he wheeled about, toward the porters who were gaping at all this. His eye lighted on Ofuala, the mess boy. Ofuala was wiry and slightly hunch-backed, and had a pear-shaped head a bit too large for his body.

Bannerhall shot a finger at him. "*You* helped put up the tent. *You* allowed it to happen!"

Ofuala blinked.

BANNERHALL then made a loud noise that was somewhere between a roar and a scream, rushed forward, swept up a bush knife, and swung mightily at Ofuala. Ofuala barely managed to dodge the blow. His eyes were great white rings—Karey glimpsed his terrified face just before he whirled away and ran for the jungle.

Bannerhall leapt after him. He swung the bush-knife again. He made his roaring-screaming sound—

"Bannerhall!" Karey shouted. "Stop that! Drop that knife!"

Bannerhall didn't seem to hear him.

Karey rushed across the clearing, came up behind the fat man just as he was about to swing, grabbed his upraised arm, and then twisted until the knife fell.

Bannerhall whirled and there was fire in his eye. He called Karey an obscene name. He swung his fat fist at Karey.

It was a wild and clumsy swing, but there was weight, and even some power behind it—it might have done damage had it struck. Karey slipped under it neatly and at the same time sent a short, hard blow—one that traveled a little more than eight inches—to the exact center of Bannerhall's jaw.

Bannerhall's eyes glazed over and he rocked a bit before he fell flat on his face.

Karey then turned and calmly ordered water so that he could revive the man.

In the days that followed neither spoke of the incident again, but the silence between the two men was like the space between a gingerly thumb and a hollow-ground razor edge. And Karey was kept in maddening uncertainty trying to watch Bannerhall to see that the man didn't shoot him in the back, and trying to keep the porters from deserting at the same time. He could have beat his way back easily enough had they deserted back on the river. But Karey, for all his bush-experience, didn't care for the idea of stumbling through the jungle without them. He'd seen too many strong men find the jungle somewhat stronger.

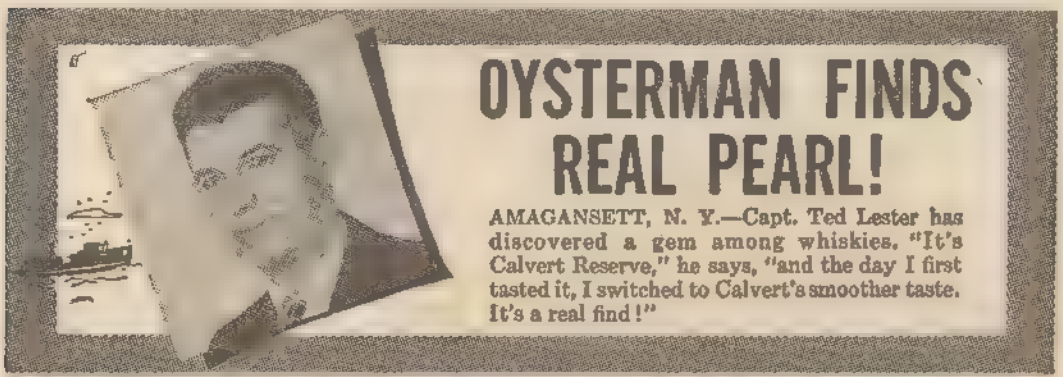
Somehow, Karey kept everybody pushing on.

Four days later they met the Atambi.

It came about very simply: the party emerged into a swampy clearing, and there, on the other side of it, stood at least forty tall, slender warriors in skins and plumes. They seemed to be waiting for them. Everybody stopped.

Bannerhall gasped and went white.

"It's all right," Karey said, keeping his eyes on the warriors. "They'd have ambushed us if they meant harm. They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don't want to kill us. At least, not right at the moment—"

"I—I shouldn't have allowed it!" muttered Bannerhall. "We shouldn't have come here."

"Sh!" said Karey sharply. He turned and spoke to the porters. Most of them were standing in half-frozen attitudes, looking at the tall men. Then Karey said to Bannerhall, "Wait here. Don't move; don't look worried. Cover me, and if they start an attack, stay where you are and shoot back. You don't stand a chance running through the jungle."

Bannerhall groaned.

Karey stepped forward and started across the swampy clearing.

The tall warriors watched him unmovingly. Even their eyes didn't move. They were all exceptionally lank; they reminded Karey somewhat of the Nuers of the White Nile, the stork men. Their muscles seemed hard, black leather straps on their bones. There was one who stood forward and a little apart from the others, and who seemed to be the leader. He was dressed a bit more resplendently. He wore a breech-skin, copper bracelets, and about his head a wide, snakeskin band into which plumes were stuck.

Karey halted several paces from the warrior, lifted his hand, and said in interior dialect: "I come in peace."

The tall warrior evidently understood. He repeated the word. "Peace."

A tension had been broken, and the others stirred and muttered among themselves.

Now Karey spoke very slowly and helped his words along with gestures. "We come. Bring presents. We will talk. We will look. After three suns, we will go in peace."

THE warrior seemed to understand that. His voice was rather deep and strident, and he answered just as haltingly in the same dialect, or at least an understandable version of it. "I am N'Tinkeno, chief of Atambi. I take presents. I give presents. We will talk. You come with me to the village."

Karey smiled, and N'Tinkeno smiled back, showing long, strong, yellowish teeth.

Everything was all right—for the moment, anyway. Although Karey wasn't prepared to guess how the Atambi might feel about things tomorrow, or even a couple of hours from now.

The party was led another several miles into the jungle—Bannerhall grumbling fretfully all the while—and then they came to the Atambi village. It was rather large for a forest kraal; Karey estimated some fifty or sixty thatched houses. There were plantain groves and patches of kaffir corn around the village, and there was a worn downslope trail which obviously led to some nearby stream. There was the usual pungent, slightly fishy smell of a forest village. Bannerhall wrinkled his nose.

Karey grinned, and then suddenly his grin faded as they came to the main clearing, and he saw what was waiting for them ahead.

Apparently the whole village had turned out to meet the strangers. Women, mostly with infants, and oldsters and smaller children lined both sides of the clearing. At the head of the clearing was an orchestra of a kind of xylophone, some long reed flutes whose ends touched the ground, and several assorted drums. Before the orchestra sat a hassock, covered with leopard skin. And before this throne there was a thatched cage affair, perhaps the size of a piano crate, its corner stakes driven into the ground. Through the thatch Karey could see the slowly writhing forms of perhaps a score of snakes. . .

He heard a half-choked gasp beside him and he knew that Bannerhall had seen, too.

"Quiet!" he whispered. "Just take everything naturally and there won't be any danger. Don't do anything strange or sudden. No telling how they'd react—"

Bannerhall groaned again and staggered on.

The tall chief, N'Tinkeno, now took his place at the leopard skin hassock where there was an involved reception ceremony. Karey managed to follow this easily enough. Several of the tribesmen—dignitaries, evidently—made long, sing-song speeches. When there was an expectant pause Karey called forth the porters who bore the trade boxes. Bannerhall hadn't wanted to bother with these supplies of

cloth, beads, wire, mirrors—but Karey had insisted.

He made the presents and the Atambi were pleased.

The chief then gave some orders and several of his men scurried off, plainly to fetch reciprocal presents for the visitors.

"Well," Bannerhall grumbled, "they may have some interesting ivory or something for us—"

But they hadn't. Beaming, and quite pleased with themselves, they produced the usual jungle present—several scrawny and patchy chickens.

"Just stupid, stinking blacks," said Bannerhall.

Abruptly, the orchestra began to play. There was a curious, broken rhythm in the drums and xylophone, and the wail of the flutes curled around and over it, like a serpent on a limb. The lines of watchers began to chant softly. They began to shuffle their feet. Some strange, common instinct set the pattern of the step; they shuffled a bit to one side, dipped and then shuffled for a while in the opposite direction.

N'Tinkeno sat on his throne with his palms on his knees, his eyes slightly lidded, and his head cocked to one side. As though waiting for something.

Bannerhall fidgeted and Karey whispered sharply: "For the love of Mike—be still!"

The drums kept beating. Presently, the chanting rose in volume and pitch. The dancers formed a file and began to move around the clearing in a sinuous pattern.

"It's their snake dance!" Karey muttered excitedly to Bannerhall. "But we don't dare use the cameras. Not without showing them first. Letting them get used to the idea. Damn—why couldn't they have waited?"

Bannerhall said, "Why would we have to show them first?"

"Too dangerous otherwise," said Karey. "They might turn on us at the first sight of anything unusual. You can't afford to startle them."

The drums throbbed more loudly.

Now Karey could feel their vibration in the soles of his feet. Some of the chanting rose to a falsetto. The flutes uttered piercing cries.

ABRUPTLY, N'Tinkeno rose from his leopard skin throne. He held up his hand. There was a sudden and awful silence. The line of dancers stopped. The music stopped. All of the Atambi turned and regarded their chief with wide, expectant eyes. He walked slowly forward toward the thatched cage in the middle of the clearing. He walked with stiff, unnatural steps. The drums began to beat softly again . . .

Bannerhall said, "What now?" And Karey said, "Sh!"

N'Tinkeno opened a thonged door on the cage. The drums quickened, crescendoed; the watchers began chanting again. Slowly, slowly, N'Tinkeno reached inside, into that tangle of snakes. Karey glanced at Bannerhall. Bannerhall's jaws hung, and his puffy cheeks seemed suddenly to deflate themselves. Karey looked back at the cage again. N'Tinkeno carefully drew out a thick-bodied snake, and held him on outstretched palms. The bright pattern of its scales rippled, showing a seeming iridescence. It was a Gaboon viper. The drums went into a purring beat, and N'Tinkeno backed away from the cage, and then someone else ran up and closed the door and tied the thongs again.

N'Tinkeno turned. He looked up from the snake. The reptile lay inert except for its head and neck which wove back and forth slowly and appeared to keep time with the chanting and the drums. Its delicate forked tongue flicked nervously.

N'Tinkeno looked directly at Bannerhall, and then walked toward him.

Bannerhall took a backward step. "No—don't bring that thing here!" he said.

"Bannerhall!" Karey's whisper was low, but arresting. "Whatever you do don't move! Don't bat an eye! If you ever controlled yourself in your life, do it now! Just—just hang on till he finishes!"

Bannerhall stood where he was and stared, and his eyes widened a little more with each step that N'Tinkeno took toward him. N'Tinkeno still held the snake forward. He moved slowly and inexorably.

And Bannerhall tried. That much must be said for him—he tried. He pressed his lips together and every trace of color went out of his face, and he rocked and trembled

from all the rolling, tempestuous emotions within him.

N'Tinkeno came to within two paces. He stopped. He thrust the snake forward at Bannerhall and grunted something which was obviously the equivalent of: "Here—take it."

"Go on!" whispered Karey. *"You've got to!"*

Bannerhall was still trying. He lifted his fat arms. He got them to the level of his waist. He held them there, working his plump fingers in and out. A pitiful moan sounded through his compressed lips.

"Take it!" said Karey in an agonized whisper.

Then Bannerhall suddenly screamed. All the terror of his thinly civilized soul was in that scream. It was loud, and it was sudden, and it startled N'Tinkeno. The chief dropped the snake. The snake lay there, turning only its head this way and that in bewildered fashion. Bannerhall backed away. With quick, panicky movements—too quick for Karey to interfere—he yanked his pistol from its holster, pointed it, and fired one shot after another into the snake—

A great, concerted howl rose from the Atambi, and they closed in on the two white men and on the twelve porters.

They trussed everybody, of course. They trussed Karey and Bannerhall and Ofuala the mess boy and the rest. They slung each man, by his hands and feet, to a long pole; they strung the poles and their burdens like so many hams along two parallel raised drying racks at the opposite end of the village.

All through it, Bannerhall wailed and kicked and screamed. "It's all your fault, Karey! Now you've done it! Damn you, Karey! Damn you, damn you, damn you!" screamed Boardman Bannerhall, the Third.

Karey thought. He thought hard and fast. And he got an idea.

It was some time before he could catch N'Tinkeno's attention. He finally did so by shouting the chief's name during a short lull in the excitement. The chief came over to him and glared at his supine face.

This time Karey spoke more slowly and carefully than ever. "N'Tinkeno, hear. I am a great witch doctor and magician. Set me free a little and I will show you how to make a man be bitten by a snake, and still not die!"

N'Tinkeno pretended not to understand at first. He even started to walk away. Then Karey spoke his name again in that quiet, commanding way of his. He used every drop of personal magnetism he had, perhaps. At any rate, N'Tinkeno turned, listened again, and then frowned and considered the matter.

It took a great deal of palaver. Perhaps ten minutes of it. But N'Tinkeno finally deepened his frown—to show that all of this was very much against his better judgment—and ordered Karey temporarily freed. He announced to the rest what Karey had promised to do. Have a man bitten by a snake, and magically save him from death. The idea interested all of them very much. They formed a circle, and Karey stood in the middle of it rubbing the circulation back into his wrists and ankles, and they waited for him to do his stuff.

He was finally ready. He made a good show of it. He took his time and he turned first in a slow circle and looked at all of them. Next he pointed to the snake cage. They looked. He swung his arm slowly, and now he pointed to Bannerhall, where he hung.

Bannerhall had been watching all of this in a stupefied way. He'd understood none of Karey's words to the chief. But he seemed to suspect the meaning of Karey's gestures. "Karey! What are you doing? What are you trying to do?"

Karey didn't answer him. He pointed again to the snake cage and said in dialect: "Bring a snake!"

N'TINKENO repeated the order in the Atambi tongue. Two warriors ran to obey. They were apparently specialists at the business of handling reptiles; they didn't do it barehandedly as N'Tinkeno had during the ceremony, but used forked sticks and a thong. They picked out another Gaboon viper, and brought it back, half-garroted.

In dramatic, hollow tones Karey said, "First—magic!"

The Atambi watched and waited.

Over the squirming, protesting fat playboy, Karey made a series of mysterious waves and passes, and all the while muttered nonsense syllables.

Suddenly, he turned to the two snake-handlers and beckoned. They came forward. He pointed to Bannerhall's fat leg, just above the knee, where the trouser leg had fallen and the flabby flesh was exposed.

Bannerhall howled. *"Karey—you—you can't do this! You're an inhuman fiend!"*

Karey made a gesture of command. The snake-handlers stepped forward and lifted the sluggish, thick-bodied viper to Bannerhall's leg. Bannerhall this time screamed until it seemed that he would tear the lining from his throat.

They put the viper's head to the flesh. The angry, frightened thing struck and sank his fangs deeply—

Bannerhall bleated once with the burning pain of the venom, and then he passed out cold.

Karey kept up his cabalistic gestures and his mumbo-jumbo. The Atambi pressed forward, staring. A man bitten by a Gaboon viper died in a very short time; they wouldn't have long to wait.

Five minutes passed and Bannerhall didn't die. He opened his eyes, as a matter of fact, gave another pitiful moan, and promptly fainted again.

Ten minutes passed.

Bannerhall was a sickly gray-green color. He had become conscious again, and he writhed and groaned with pain. His leg was blue and swollen where the viper had bitten. His eyes were dull, and his jaw was slack and half-paralyzed.

But he didn't die.

Night fell, and the Atambi lighted fires and torches and Bannerhall groaned all through the night, and Karey stood over him and muttered and gestured, and—

Bannerhall didn't die.

Somehow Karey, though dead tired, stayed on his feet. Kept gesturing; kept mumbling. He had to do that to hold their attention. By morning Bannerhall slept. His pulse was slow and his face was ashen and his breathing was so faint that it was almost unnoticeable.

But he wasn't dead.

And finally, in the middle of the morning, when N'Tinkeno came quietly to Karey's side and handed him another scrawny chicken for a present, Karey knew he had won.

THE bleary-eyed derelict looked ready for another gin, and I snapped my fingers and the Senegalese waiter looked down with mild disapproval at the dishevelled white man, then brought the drink. The man thumbed his waxed mustache in an absent-minded way, and stared into the gin-slick for some moments before he took a taste.

"Well," I asked, "did they both come back?"

He nodded. He kept his eyes on the gin. "You see, Karey had heard as many snake stories as anyone else—hoop snakes and spitting snakes and milk snakes—and also the old one about pigs being immune to snakebite. He wondered if a man with a lot of surplus fat—such as a pig has—might not absorb the poison and survive the bite!"

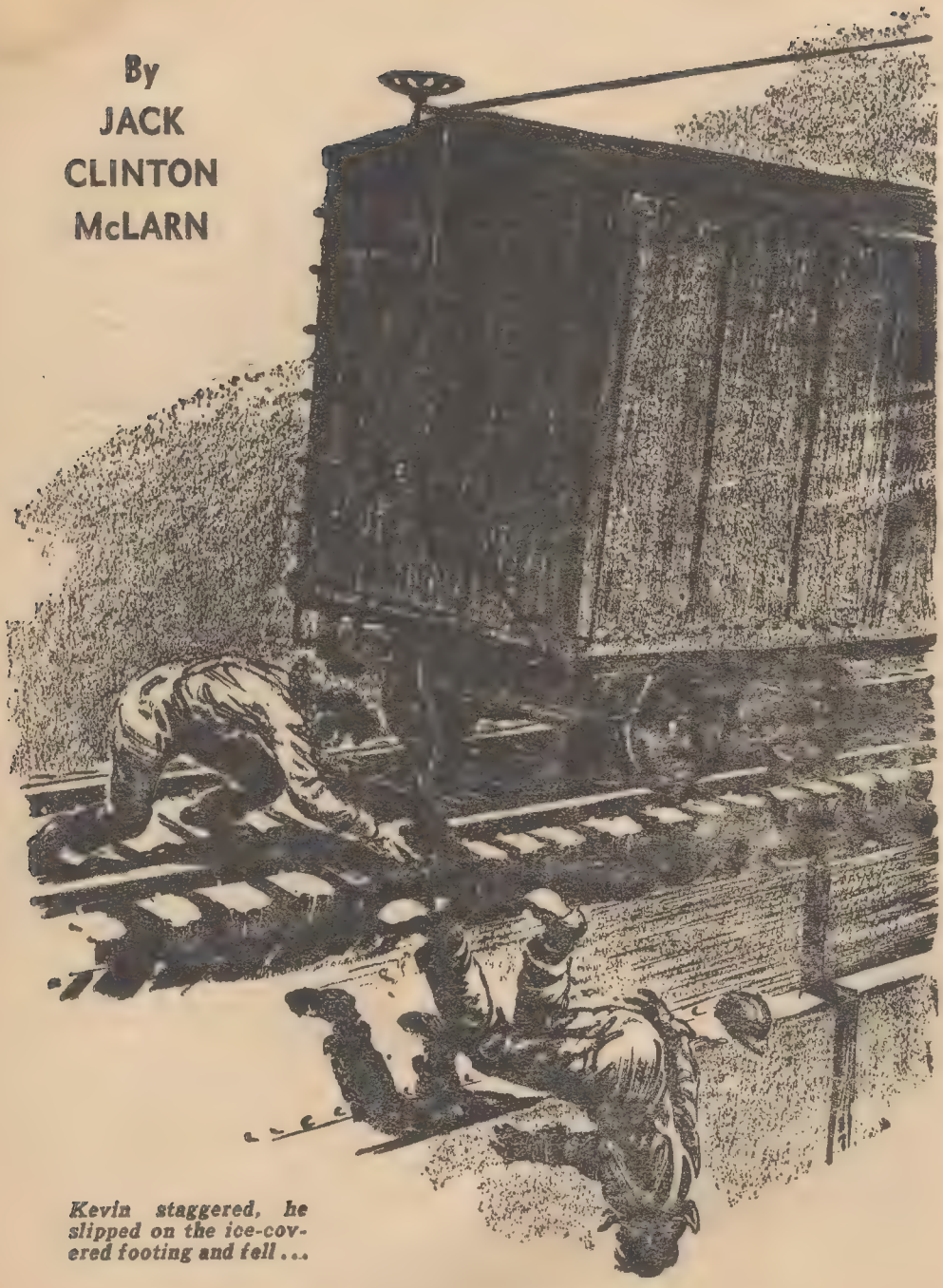
"And that was what happened?"

"Yes. Bannerhall was a mighty sick young man for many days, but he did recover. There was only one trouble as far as Karey was concerned. He had taken a terrible chance—he had taken it with a man's life."

I smiled sympathetically. "And it preyed on his conscience, and he took to drink, and that ruined him? And you, my friend, are really Preston Karey?"

He looked up from his gin. He blinked once. "No, sir," he said with dignity. "I was never a hunter or a guide. I was a rich man, though, until I started drinking and squandered everything in a few years of it. I had quite a shock, and that's what started it. You see, *my* name is Boardman Bannerhall." He looked back into his gin, sighed, and added wearily: "The Third."

By
JACK
CLINTON
McLARN



Kevin staggered, he slipped on the ice-covered footing and fell . . .

BIG HOOK

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSEPH A. FARREN

THE metal couplings on the dangling train line air hose were frost-white, the rubber stiff and unyielding . . . Again he heard himself growl in annoyance . . . Again he saw himself step between the cars, squat beneath the drawheads, wrestle impatiently with the stubborn fittings . . . And once more he heard the sound, the quick succession of crashes of metal upon metal, the unmistakable squeal of compressing draft gear coming toward him, the slack was running in . . . He was numb, helpless, unable to move, to fling his body backward, out of reach of the death that was in the shining wheel tread inches away . . . A terrified scream stuck in his throat . . .

Then Bradley Mathis was awake, lying in his bed in Ma Gannon's railroad boarding house. His face was wet with icy sweat, his body rigid, his throat hurting. He flung the blanket away, let the bitter wind from the wide-open window blow chill on his clammy body.

It had come again. *The Dream*—the ghastly trick of mind that was eating into

his soul, dulling his senses, numbing his thoughts to all things save its ugly self.

A faint glow was struggling with the lowering snow-clouds over Thunder Mountain, the amber light atop a diesel switcher moved in stealthy silence among the snow-topped cars in the tracks of Morgan Yard. Brad reached for a cigarette. The pack was crushed and empty, the little pile of stubs bearing mute testimony to a restless, endless night.

He slid his six-foot blocking back's body out of the narrow bed, drew a deep breath of the cold mountain air. He was young, with something of the dreamer about his sensitive face, contrasting oddly with the ruggedness of his tall frame. But there were lines in his face now, lines that hadn't been there three days before, and his dark eyes burned with the thing they had unwillingly seen.

He padded to the window to shut out the cold. The gray houses along the single street below him were dark and silent. Dark and silent, except for one where a light burned on the little porch, an island of yellow brilliance in the early morning gloom. It glinted coldly on the shiny wreath of artificial leaves and plastic flowers that hung on the door of Jud Floyd's house.

Jud Floyd. Big, awkward, good-natured Jud Floyd, Car Foreman for the SG&A at Morgan Yard since anybody could remember. Jud Floyd, whose shambling walk and window-rattling bellow were legend from The River to the Mountains, from one end of the SG&A to the other. Jud Floyd, guide, instructor and guardian angel to the newest of the Special Apprentices, to Brad Mathis. Jud Floyd, with kids like stair-steps—

Brad closed the window. Jud wouldn't be checking him on that morning. Jud Floyd wouldn't be lecturing him on Interchange Rules. Jud Floyd wouldn't be showing him how to put in a brake hanger pin without losing one or more fingers. Jud Floyd was dead. Dead, beneath the crushing wheels of a box car, like some bindle-stiff crocked with rot-gut.

He splashed icy water from the chipped porcelain pitcher into the cracked basin, plunged his face into it, gasped with the shock. He had to get hold of himself. He had a job to do. The SG&A had picked him out of his class at State, put him through three gruelling years of special training in the shops of the sprawling railroad. "Officer material" they called him, and set about to find out if they were right. Now the technical part of his training was over. All that remained was for him to serve a year at the trade, leaving behind him his text-books and all that went with them, and doing the work of a Carman. Then he would be ready.

So, three days ago, the SG&A had sent him to Morgan Yard, to work for Jud Floyd. The Superintendent of Motive Power had put it to him straight. "He's hard, Jud is, but he's fair. I've told him to give you the works. He'll do it. Good luck."

And now, Jud Floyd was dead. And, because Jud Floyd was dead, Brad Mathis was alive.

He dressed slowly, shivering in the bare, heatless little room, shivering with the cold, picked up his expensive leather jacket. He had to face them again, the men of Morgan Yard, the men who today would bury Jud Floyd. Face the silent hostility in their eyes, the clipped contempt in their voices . . .

The smell of frying bacon, of fierce coffee, swirled about him as he went down the narrow stairs, as did the low hum of men's voices. Kevin Floyd, Jud's oldest son, saw him first as he stood in the doorway. Kevin Floyd, who might have been his father, so alike were they. The same wind-burned face, the same pale blue eyes, the same huge shoulders. But there was nothing friendly in that face now, nothing friendly in the sudden silence. Brad felt their eyes upon him, the others, Lemly, Malone, Gobble, Worden, Shaw — the blood rushed to his face, his mouth went dry.

Kevin Floyd's chair scraped as he pushed away from the long table. "All 't once I ain't hungry," he announced. "Funeral's four o'clock, for them as cares to come."

He shouldered past Brad and stalked out, ignoring him. Then there was more scraping of chairs, more shuffling of heavy shoes, and Brad was alone. He sat down in his place, staring grimly at the half-empty plates.

Dumpy little Ma Gannon came bustling

in with the inevitable steaming coffee-pot, her face twisted a little at the sight of the solitary figure at the table.

"They blamin' you, honey?" she said regretfully. "I know—I been hearin' the talk. Sure hate it, had to be you."

Brad smiled bitterly. "Thanks. Guess it was my fault, though." He shrugged. "I knew better than to go between cars without a blue flag. Just in a hurry. Then they dropped a cut in on me—Jud saw what was happening, jerked me out. He —fell under—"

"Drink your coffee, honey," Ma Gannon said comfortingly. "Don't pay no mind to Kevin—he's hot headed, like all the Floyds. I'll get you some cakes—"

She padded away, her slippered feet making little slapping sounds on the worn linoleum. Brad choked down the scalding coffee, it was bitter in his mouth. He could hear again the choked grunt, the only sound that Jud Floyd had time to utter before the wheels crushed out his life. He clenched his hands at the thought. Ma Gannon brought his plate.

"Eat your breakfast, honey," she urged. "Got to keep up your stren'th."

But he was on his feet, sick nausea welling up in his throat. He snatched his jacket, strode out of the house, fighting back an urge to cry.

THE Carmen were gathered at the time clock in the locker shanty. Jud Floyd's grease-stiffened gloves were lying crossed on the bench before his locker, beside the inspector's hammer he always carried. Kevin Floyd looked grimly at Brad.

"There they stay, mister, till pa's in his grave," he told him, bitterly. "I'm workin' for pa today. Maybe that ain't how you'd do it, but it's our way." He spat within inches of Brad's feet. "And you—maybe you better work on the rip track this day. Don't want you gettin' nobody else kilt around here. Or, maybe—" He looked into Brad's eyes, and Brad went cold at the hatred he read in the stare. "Maybe you'd rather get the hell away from here, 'fore I get a notion to collect for pa right now."

There was a muttered growl from the little group of men, and Brad felt the slow warmth of anger within him. He faced the lowering youth squarely.

"Listen, Floyd," he said, quietly. "I'd give my life if it hadn't happened. I know that but for me your father would be here. But what's done can't be helped. I—"

Kevin Floyd lifted his hand. "So be, mister," he said brusquely. "So be. When pa's in his grave, we'll settle things, you and me. Don't fear, we'll settle things."

The deep-throated shop whistle boomed its single note, the men filed past the time clock, scattered to their tasks, and again Brad was alone. He looked again at the crossed gloves, the fingers bent like Jud's own fingers, the hammer, worn smooth by Jud's hands. There was a spot of something on the handle, a dried, brownish stain . . .

Brad ran his time card through the clock, stuck it in the rack, plodded numbly toward the repair track, his thoughts as black as the hatred that surged everywhere about him.

All day the recording thermometer in the yard office had been dropping its red line toward the center of the dial. All day the wind had been rising, howling eerily through the telephone and telegraph wires, sending the boiler house smoke in little black gouts along the frozen ground. All day the clouds had been piling up over Thunder Mountain until they seemed to brush the skeleton-like branches of the gaunt dead trees on the slopes above Morgan Yard.

When Brad checked the clock at three-fifteen, a fine mist was falling, mingled with tiny pellets of ice that cut and burned and stung in the driving wind. Pellets of ice that began to cling to the northward side of buildings, of poles, of trees—and of wires. Already smoke was boiling out of the stack of Big Betsy, the huge wrecking crane. On a night like this, Jud Floyd would be ready for anything. And Kevin Floyd was Jud Floyd, he was Car Foreman at Morgan Yard, until somebody in the big office said differently.

The wind was whining eerily when they brought Jud Floyd out of the little house. Grim and silent they were, the men of Morgan Yard, awkward and uncomfortable in their Sunday clothes. Ignoring the undertaker's men, they carried Jud down the road to the little burying-ground, the sleet

rattling on the gray casket in little hissing sounds. Bareheaded they stood around the open grave, while the minister read over Jud Floyd, while the younger Floyds sniffled in the cold, while dry-eyed Martha, Jud's wife, stood and listened, her mouth set to stop its quivering, her work-red hands clasped stolidly before her.

Brad Mathis stood apart from the others, unnoticed and miserable, his eyes hurting with the cold and his own heartsickness. Then it was over, the undertaker's little gadget made little screeching noises as it lowered Jud Floyd. And just as the casket touched the bottom of the hole in which Jud Floyd would rest for eternity, the sound came, like a requiem. The low, mournful hoot of the shop whistle. Three long, two short. Three long, two short. The derrick call. The call for men to return to the tasks of the living.

Kevin Floyd stepped away from the grave, already beginning to whiten with frozen rain, lifted his hand.

"So be." His voice was loud and harsh after the minister's hushed words. "So be. We've done what we could for him. The derrick's called. I want a crew—Gobble, Lemly, Shaw, Worden—" he paused, his eyes flickering over the faces around him, rested coldly upon Brad Mathis. "And you, mister. Pa always said he wanted you to see how we picked up a car. Let's go."

He looked again at the grave, the shovels were already at work, the earth making horrible final sounds as the frozen clods clumped on the rough box. The few flowers were stiffening in the cold, the little knot of people was already dissolving under the gray sky. Then he turned and strode down the hill toward the derrick track, followed by the men of the derrick crew.

"AIN'T MUCH of a derailment," Kevin Floyd told them as they sat around the table in the derrick car, while the relief train lurched and groaned on its way. "Dispatcher says only one pair of trucks off. Right slap-dab in the middle of Stinkin' Run trussel. One car—and the main line tied up from hell to breakfast."

Brad stared out into the night. The sleet-ice was driving down slantwise now, the lights of the derrick car reflected on a world of white, on strange, thick white ropes where the telegraph wires paraded endlessly past. The ice was clinging now, adding its weight hour by hour, until the thin wires were sagging in deepening curves toward the ground, curves of glistening beauty.

Kevin Floyd's voice rumbled on.

"Ever see Stinkin' Run, mister? Open deck trussel—hundred sixty feet over white water an' rocks. Hope you ain't light-headed."

The cold malevolence in Kevin's eyes was a living thing, the hatred seemed to glow about him like an aura. And Brad remembered his words, back in the shanty:

"When pa's in his grave, we'll settle things . . . you an' me . . ."

In a flash of realization, Brad knew that he was in an unreal, dime-novel spot. He knew that Kevin Floyd was going to "settle things." And in these primitive mountains, among these ruthless, violent throw-backs to another age, that could mean but one thing . . .

Kevin Floyd spoke again, casually. "Gobble," he said. "Supposin' you sort of look after mister. Don't let him get any ideas about wanderin' off when we stop. Pa wanted him to learn how to make hitches. Be 'shamed not to show him now."

The big Carman grinned warmly at Brad. "Sure, Kev," he rumbled. "Mister'll be right around when he's wanted. Right near to hand."

IT TAKES a lot of time to get ready to clear a main line when something has gone wrong. It takes time to pull the rest of a train away from a car gone haywire. It takes time to swap positions on the relief train with the locomotive and the derrick, the "big hook." It takes a lot of time.

When the train crew had concluded their intricate maneuvers and Kevin Floyd had the "it's all yours, bub" signal, the sleet-ice had stopped falling, the derrick men boiled out of the car into a world of eerie, silent white, in which the sullen pounding of the cross-compound pumps on the locomotive and the whine of the headlight generators were oddly muted—

and the sound of cracking limbs in the forest around them, cracking limbs under crushing weight of ice.

Their heavy shoes made crunching sounds in the ice-coated ballast as Brad and his escort walked past the engine, past the derrick, and stood on the abutment of Stinkin' Run trestle, in the glare of the single headlight on the derrick boom.

Kevin Floyd gestured at the long, single-tracked trestle, the ice-sheathed bridge ties shining in the dark, a silvery trail over sheer blackness.

"Nothin' to it, mister," he said. "Box car. One truck derailed, busted truck side. Hell of it, it's on th' other end. Got to work from this end, and that ain't good."

Brad looked at the dim bulk of the car, canted a little in the middle of the long structure. A gust of wind whipped up the black valley beneath them, the leaning car seemed to sag, sway with the blast.

"Nothin' to it," Kevin Floyd's voice was quiet, with a deadly little edge to it. "Drop the single-line over th' other end, throw a hitch around the drawbar, lift her up, cut th' brake rod free, couple the derrick to this end, drag her off, then go back and git th' truck. Just one thing—" he grinned disarmingly at Brad. "Somebody's got to climb that box car and lug th' little hook to th' other end and make th' hitch. I just wonder who it'll be."

There was a sardonic chuckle from the knot of men back in the shadows. "Kev, ain't that a job for mister big?" a voice drawled. "A job for the brainy boy?"

Brad took an involuntary step backward, the black void was terribly close. Kevin Floyd laughed.

"Pretty deep, mister," he said. "Pretty long fall—hundred sixty feet—" his voice changed abruptly, became harsh, commanding. "Start walkin', mister. The derrick'll be right behind you. Move!"

Brad looked around at the circle of men in the shadows, saw only grim acceptance in their faces. He was on his own. Slowly, he unzipped his heavy jacket, threw it off, the chill wind bit savagely into his body, he clenched his wet hands, stepped on the first ice-coated bridge tie. His foot slipped on the glass-slick timber and his body crashed stunningly to the track.

"Kev, that ain't right." Brad recognized the voice of Gobble, the derrick engineer. "Hell, let the kid ride the derrick with the rest of us. No sense in bein' bullheaded—"

Kevin Floyd wheeled angrily. "Shut your face, Gob," he grated. "But for this 'un, pa'd be walkin' and talkin'. I'm speakin' for him now."

Brad got carefully to his feet, red rage warming his chilled body. He leaned down, unlaced his shoes, kicked them off, the ice seared his feet through his thick socks. The fear was gone now, replaced with a sort of primitive rage at his own helplessness.

"Listen, Floyd," he said, his voice shaking with the fury within him. "You were right—we have got something to settle. Remember that."

He turned his back on them, and strode out across the ice-coated trestle toward the bulk in the middle of the long span, trying not to think what a mis-step would mean, trying to ignore the burning of the ice against his feet.

Walking a trestle in daylight, when a man can see where he steps, is sort of pleasant. Dangerous enough, maybe, but pleasant, too. Walking the same trestle in the blackness of a below-freezing night, with bitter wind howling up from emptiness below, with the black spaces between the ties almost indistinguishable from the ties themselves, is something else again.

The structure seemed to vibrate as the derrick and its attendant locomotive eased forward, the derrick headlight threw his own long shadow before him. He increased his pace, not daring to look around, not daring to look ahead, intent only upon the ominous black spaces between the ties, the black emptiness an arm's length on either side. His jaws clenched in helpless fury, a welter of fear seething through his brain.

Then he bumped into the car itself. His fingers closed desperately around an ice-slick cut-lever, he clung to it, sweat trickling down his face, his stomach retching painfully. This was worse than *The Dream*—it was a freezing, unreal nightmare.

Then the single eye of the big hook was staring coldly down at him, Kevin Floyd's voice came out of the darkness behind the light. "All right, mister. When you're ready, suppose you skin up that there lad-

der. Straight on top, then you c'n lug the little hook. And—don't get hurted."

His spine chilling agonizingly, Brad reached gingerly for the end-ladder, his fingers slipping and skidding on the ice-coated metal. Slowly, carefully, he made his way up the side of the car, gripped the edge of the ice-slick metal running board. There was a grinding squeal of steel cable through sheaves, the steel hook of the single line came snaking down to him. He put his shoulder against the cable, inched his way down the length of the car. The hook was heavy, the cable was heavy, one wrong move and it would drag him over the edge. But Gobble, back at the controls of the great machine, was decent, the cable fed to him slowly, matching his painful progress. Then he was at the derailed end of the car. His throat dry, he fed the cable over the edge, saw it go slack as the hook touched the ties. Then, trying not to think about what was below him, he let himself over the edge, his feet clawing desperately for the ladder rounds. He let himself down slowly, cautiously, the light of the derrick was blotted out by the car itself, and he was in the dark.

WHEN his feet touched the ties again his body was shaking with nervousness and with cold, his clothes were sticking to him, clammy with the moisture that was pouring from his skin. For one wild moment he wanted to run away, toward the blackness at the other end of the trestle, to lose himself in the whiteness of the frozen forest—anything to get away from Kevin Floyd and his grim crew. He drew a shaking arm across his wet forehead, his mind racing. A hundred yards at the most, and he would be free. In danger of freezing, perhaps, but free.

And then it was too late. Kevin Floyd was clambering swiftly down in the dark beside him.

"Didn't think you'd make it, mister," he said, grudging admiration in his voice. "Smart trick that, takin' off your shoes. Be just too bad, you fall off'n this trussel. Hoped you would, sort of. Out'en my way."

With expert swiftness, Kevin Floyd looped the single line around the drawhead, glanced back at Brad.

"Nothin' to it—nothin' at all." He lifted his voice. "O.K., Gob—tighten up 'bout a foot. Take her up."

The derrick engine thuttered, the cable tightened with a jerk. Sparks flashed as the hook tightened—and slipped. With a blistering curse, Kevin Floyd stepped forward to adjust the hitch.

Then it happened, with terrifying swiftness. The hook caught beneath the drawhead, the cable jerked taut with a deep-throated "zoom." The car shuddered, lifted and swung, ever so little. But it was enough.

The knuckle brushed against Kevin, like a playful animal nuzzling a keeper. He staggered, his foot slipped on the ice-covered footing and he fell, his back across the rail, his head and shoulders over nothing.

Then he began to move. Slowly, then swiftly, he slid out over the blackness. A shout sticking in his throat, Brad lunged frantically. He sprawled on his face on the ties, his fingers clawing into the ice. But he was too late. Kevin Floyd was gone and he was alone. Sick, horrified, he closed his eyes and waited for the indescribable sound that would be Kevin Floyd's body, crushing itself in the ice-covered blackness far below. Unconsciously, he began counting the seconds—one—two—

Then he heard it, a gasping, choked groan, coming from nowhere. The sound was repeated, the whimper of someone or something in pain. His teeth chattering, he crept to the edge of the trestle, peered down. And gasped.

Twenty feet below the deck of the trestle the telegraph and telephone wires ran. Hanging from wooden crossarms bolted to the piers of Stinkin' Run trestle, the wires hung, ice coated now, thick two inch ropes, swinging in graceful curves over the dark valley.

And Kevin Floyd was lying across the topmost strands, like a child in its cradle, rocking gently in the howling icy wind.

The shock of sheer relief made Brad weak. Kevin Floyd was safe. He could call the crew, they could lower ropes to him, haul him up—

There was a brittle cracking sound, and one of the ice-coated wires parted, went snapping among its fellows, and Brad

knew that time for Kevin Floyd was running out. Whatever was done would have to be done quickly. Quickly, or not at all.

The derrick line hung limply at the end of the car, the hook swinging free. But that wouldn't work—the end of the boom was thirty feet away, once freed of the end of the car the line would swing out into space, far out of reach of Kevin Floyd.

Gobble's voice bawled impatiently from the derrick.

"Kev! You guys playin' games? Get goin'!"

There was another brittle popping sound, another broken wire clattered ominously free of the crossarm.

"Floyd!" Brad called, softly. "Can you move your arms?"

Kevin Floyd's voice was calm, controlled, weak with pain.

"Move—arms. Back—hurt. Looks like—pa an' me—"

Brad clenched his teeth to stop their chattering. There was one chance. A slim, desperate chance. One that might result in death for them both. One chance—

The voice wasn't his own. "Slack—off!" he called, the words cracking and echoing from the emptiness below him. "Slack—off—"

The derrick engine roared, Brad caught the dangling hook, tugged at the thing, the cable scraped protestingly against the icy edge of the metal car roof. Carefully, he fed the cable over the lip of the trestle, until it hung free, just below Kevin Floyd's body. He tugged at it, the friction might hold it long enough for him to reach Kevin.

"That'll—do!" he yelled. "That'll—do!" The hillsides caught his words, flung them back and forth in mocking laughter. The engine stopped, and Brad drew a long, shaky breath, grasped the cable, let himself over the side of Stinkin' Run trestle, over black eternity.

The cable was ice-free, but the rough strands slashed fiercely into his hands as he slid the twenty feet down to the hook. There was a grinding protest as the cable scraped along the edge of the car. If it slipped now, it would be all over for Kevin Floyd. Another wire jangled itself free—

Then he was at the end of the cable, straddling the big hook, Kevin Floyd's face a blur in the dark.

"Put your arms around me, Floyd," Brad said, quietly. "Around me, and the cable. Quick—"

His words died. Kevin Floyd did not move. He lay inert and silent across the few remaining wires.

The cable shivered and scraped far above him. With a half-forgotten prayer on his lips, Brad reached for the big man, locked his arms about him. Then, as the last of the wires tore themselves free, he drew a deep breath, and made his play.

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"Boom—right!" he shouted. "Take her up!"

Then they were dropping through space as the cable swung free, as the slack fell away, as the great boom swung to the right, out over the blackness of Stinkin' Run. The terrific shock as the hook reached the end of its fall nearly tore Brad's arms from their sockets. The combined weight of the two bodies crushed his straddling legs agonizingly against the steel hook, he screamed with the pain, screamed with the feel of Kevin Floyd's limp weight slipping from his grasp.

There was a chorus of startled yells from the derrick men, until then they were in the dark as to what had been happening on the other side of the derailed car. But they reacted instantly. The derrick engine roared, hauling the swinging cable in, while the locomotive pulled the machine away from the car.

A wave of blackness was creeping slowly up into Brad's mind, the waves of pain following it. The great eye of the derrick came closer, they were spinning now, like a child's toy at the end of a string, the agony was a real, a physical thing now, his grip was failing, the strength running out of him like water—

The wave reached his brain, surged over it, and he was falling . . . falling . . .

BRADLEY MATHIS was awake. But he wasn't lying in his bed in Ma Gannon's railroad boarding house. He was in a derrick car bunk, and it was daylight, a bright, glittering daylight, blinding sun upon blinding ice. He shuddered at the recollection. *The Dream*—worse now, worse than ever . . .

"Hello, Brad."

He moved his head, and it hurt to move. Kevin Floyd was sitting on the bunk across from him, his face oddly white under the stubble. "You all right?"

Brad stared at him dizzily, trying to bring himself back to reality. He looked down at his hands, they were swathed in bandages. Then it had happened — it wasn't a dream.

Kevin Floyd cleared his throat, and there was something of his father about him now.

"Mister, we ain't much on talkin' in this country. Guess we're sort of like somethin' I read in th' Bible once. Thought on't, lyin' up there on them wires, wonderin' what'd happen."

He lifted his head, the words came easily from his lips, in the quaint idiom of the hill-country:

"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel . . . therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed . . . ."

He looked at Brad. "That's us, mister. Livin' in these hills, livin' to ourselves so long that we was resentful of any outlander. And when pa—"

His voice died away, Brad turned his head from the sudden grief in the young-old face. He looked out at the squat, ugly buildings of Morgan Yard, at the slope of Thunder Mountain, dark against the sky.

After a long time, Kevin spoke again.

"Mister Brad, the doc says you got to take it easy-like till your hands heal—and your laigs ain't none too good, either. That hook played hell with you. But, when you rest up good, up at Ma Gannon's, and get back on the job, I—we want you to have this."

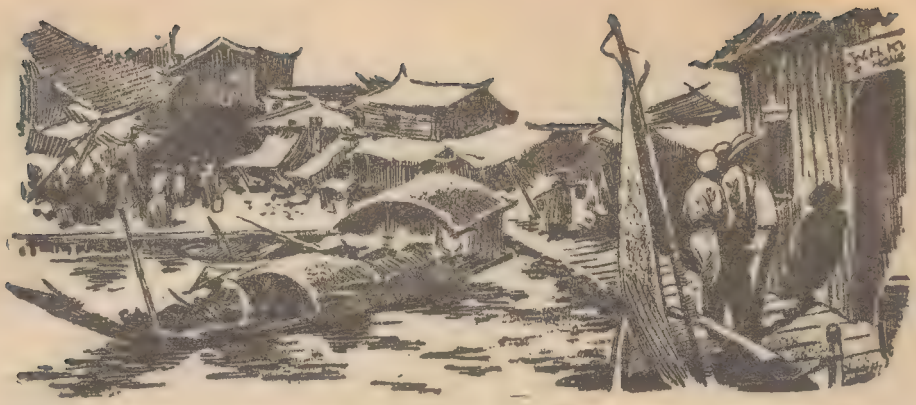
Brad looked at the thing Kevin Floyd was holding out to him, and his eyes blurred. It was a hammer, an inspector's hammer, its handle blackened and smooth worn from years of service. Jud Floyd's hammer. Kevin Floyd shuffled his feet awkwardly.

"I—I think pa'd want you to have it. He thought right much of me." He cleared his throat. "Well, got to be gittin'. Oh—we got that car all right. Didn't delay nothin'. I'll have the boys carry you 'cross the yard to Ma Gannon's after quittin' time. Take your res'."

He dropped his hand awkwardly on Brad's shoulder, went limping out of the car.

Brad touched the worn hammer with a bandaged hand. He was suddenly very tired, the aching in his body dulled itself to a far-away hurt. He closed his eyes drowsily, welcoming the sleep that was stealing over him, knowing that *The Dream* was gone now, and that the nights of torment were over.

The mountain men were paid in full. And so was he.



ICEMAN TO THE TROPICS

A FACT FEATURE By HARRY BOTSFORD

Young Frederick Tudor, an enterprising resident of Boston in the early 1800's, needed money he didn't possess. He wanted that money to finance a project he felt could not fail. The conservative bankers and ship owners glared at him when he mentioned it, curtly dismissed the young man. Friends smiled broadly and hooted at the idea as being ridiculous. Tudor was tall, handsome, persuasive, a man with an Idea. Eventually he found receptive ears, raised enough money to make him the undisputed iceman to the tropics.

His idea was simple. It was hot in the tropics, indecently hot. Where it was hot, his philosophy told him, there must be a demand for ice. It was as simple as that.

He used the borrowed money to charter a sailing ship, placed a deep layer of white pine sawdust in the hold. The sawdust cost him nothing, aside from the haulage charge. He bought 130 tons of New England ice, loaded it in the hold, sealed it completely with several feet of the sawdust, which acted as a prime insulant.

When the ship dropped anchor at the island of Martinique, he faced what the boys now call a sales promotion job. The natives had never heard of ice, had no idea how the strange material could be used. Tudor grinned and showed them. He brewed a batch of ice cream; he compounded potent and pleasant iced rum drinks—and the planters and merchants exclaimed aloud at their distinctive taste and refreshing coolness. The cargo sold briskly—the entire 260,000 pounds of it.

Frederick Tudor returned to Boston with gold jingling cheerfully in his pockets, a hold filled with rum, coffee, spices and other goods that commanded a ready market. Soon he had a monopoly on the ice business in Jamaica, had an exclusive franchise in Cuba. He owned several ships, realized a handsome profit on every voyage, repaid his loan. A Calcutta businessman wrote and begged for a cargo of ice. Calcutta, hottest corner of torrid India, gave Tudor's ship a hearty welcome.

The War of 1812 sharply curbed Tudor's maritime venture, but by the end of the first fourteen years, he had resources estimated at over $280,000, including a valuable fleet of fast sailing vessels.

The war generated a vast backlog of thirst in India, Cuba, Martinique and Jamaica. Their liking for things made with ice survived and they thirstily awaited the return of the ice ships when the Treaty of Ghent was signed.

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROGER L. THOMAS

TEXAS KILLER

IT DIDN'T mean anything to John Wesley Hardin that his father was a circuit-riding preacher or that he himself bore the name of a great hymn-writer.

Wes grew up to be about as tough a killer as ever forked a bronc. His life was a blaze of .45s and a thud of hoofs. While the old man was toting a well-thumbed Bible through the Texas frontier of blue-bonnets, mesquite and gama grass, Wes was galloping stirrup to stirrup with pistol-fading hombres whose mugs and descrip-

By FREEMAN H. HUBBARD

A leveled six-shooter sprang into each hand. "Stand still!" he commanded. "Them as don't move won't get hurt."

tions were tacked up in sheriffs' offices all over the Southwest.

If the daredevil youth had notched a six-shooter handle every time he slew a man, by his twenty-fourth birthday the grim notches would have far exceeded the tally of his years. Said the *Galveston News* in 1877: "No man can make a complete list of Hardin's victims, but the number will not fall short of twenty-eight in Kansas and the Territory and eighteen in Texas."

One point is clear: Wes Hardin was an outlaw but never a bandit. All his known killings were done in self-defense, to avenge insults, or to avoid being arrested. Such motives, in the opinion of lusty fellows who lived and died by the frontier code, justified the use of hardware.

Hardin was rarely seen in public without a brace of Colts stuck conspicuously in his belt, sash, or scabbards. Sometimes a third weapon was hidden discreetly in an under-arm holster of his own invention, known as the "Hardin jacket." Those who knew him said that no Texan of his time was faster on the draw. He shot from the hip with deadly precision. He was adept, too, in the tricky "border roll." That is, he would pretend to surrender his pistol by offering it with the butt ex-

tended toward you, but before you could take it he would give a sudden dexterous twirl, palm the pistol handle, and pull the trigger. In fact, he had a whole bag of tricks.

Bar-flies customarily fell silent and moved back when they spotted the preacher's son standing at the saloon doorway, legs parted, sombrero slanted, piglike eyes with a rattlesnake glitter darting from one man to another, and a grin on his broad face. The whole figure was poised and springy. The grin was a mask. It may have been merely a friendly invitation to a poker game. Too often it was designed to throw an intended victim off guard while the blue-eyed, yellow-haired Wes, with a lightning draw, began pumping lead.

Much crimson stained the sawdust on grog-shop floors those days. More than one pistol-toter was lulled into false security and death by the gleam of white teeth under Wes Hardin's droopy mustache. Ordinarily mild-mannered, Hardin made friends readily, spent generously, and as a rule had plenty of money to spend. His luck at gambling was phenomenal, whether in cards, the races, or dice.

The first notch in his pistol handle could have been cut in 1868. Wes was then a truculent lad of fifteen with a ten-gallon hat and black pants thrust into cowhide boots. Attached to those boots were gaudy spurs, each the size of a silver dollar. He rode a big bay mare. While visiting an uncle's farm in Polk County, Texas, he hankered to have fun with a young fellow named Marge who had been a slave there but was now free. The fun grew rough. Marge clutched at his bridle and raised a club.

Wes was furious. Cocking a pistol he had borrowed from his uncle, Judge Clabe Houlshousen, he yelled, "Get back, dammit, or I'll shoot!"

He meant it, too, but Marge didn't think so. Down came the club. Wes felt a resounding thwack and saw red. The pistol spurted vicious flame. Marge spun around crazily and fell into a ditch, mouthing curses. A few minutes later he lay still.

Wes was frightened. He knew that the Northern military men who ruled Texas with an iron fist shortly after the War Between the States did not take kindly to the killing of freed slaves. Digging spurs into the bay, he galloped back to his uncle's house.

"Uncle Clabe," he blurted out, "I just killed Marge. The lousy polecat hit me with a club an' I shot him."

The judge tugged at his beard. He didn't mind the loss of a farm hand; he could just about hire another for a swig of red-eye. But this was a nasty business for his own nephew to get mixed up in.

"Where did this happen?"

Wes told him. Man and boy mounted horses and rode to the spot.

"He's dead, all right," said Uncle Clabe. "Now tell me about it."

The lad went into detail. Houlshousen paced to and fro.

"That's bad, sonny, mighty bad! If these were normal times we could git you off with a plea of self defense. As it is, you haven't a chance. You'll have to leave quick. I'll give you some money and grub. Lay low for a spell! Don't show up again in these parts till the talk dies down."

"Sure, Uncle Clabe, I'll do what you say. Tell Pa not to worry none! I can take care of myself."

THUS the parson's boy in his early teens became a desperado. He fled to the wilderness of Trinity County. There he holed up in a deserted shack and began roping longhorns. Vast herds whose owners had not returned from war were roaming the prairie. Many calves grew up without brands. Under Texas law, unbranded cattle belonged to anyone who caught them. Wes was a lariat artist as well as a fast rider. He rounded up mavericks with the idea of assembling a herd for himself and driving it north to Kansas market.

But before the herd was large enough to drive, Wes had visitors. A squad of cavalrymen in dingy blue coats and kepis cantered up to the shack. Their leader ordered, "Come out of there, Hardin, with hands high! You won't get hurt if you give yourself up before I count ten . . . One—two—"

The boy climbed through a back window. Leaping into the saddle, he spurred his bay cruelly. The horse raced through

underbrush and a wavy sea of buffalo grass. Pursuers fell behind. Outwitting them, Wes found refuge at the home of a cousin, Simp Dixon. But not for long. Wes and Simp were riding leisurely the next day when they spied the soldiers.

"Here's where we have some fun," chuckled Simp.

Luring the troopers into ambush in a dry creek bed, the cousins hid behind bushes and waited tensely. When flashes of blue drifted by, they opened fire. Two men who would never fight again slid out of their saddles.

"Simp killed one and I killed the other," Hardin bragged years afterward, "while the rest escaped."

Now Wes was really in trouble. Taking the life of a former slave was bad enough, but to shoot down Federal soldiers in cold blood really put you outside the pale. Wes hit the trail again. For him there could be no turning back. That encounter in the creek bed had given him the cocky feeling that he was not merely a hunted fugitive but was able to defend himself.

Through half a dozen states he journeyed, sometimes with a cattle-driving outfit, the common haven for hunted men. Years of bloodshed came and went. The farther he traveled, the more graves he filled, the less chance he had of ever settling down in peace under his own name. He married a pretty Alabama girl named Jane Bowen and had a baby, but was separated from them most of the time.

By reckless riding, trickery, and deadly shooting, he managed to elude sheriffs and deputies, posses and soldiers, city marshals, and even the hard-bitten Texas Rangers, nemesis of badmen throughout the vast expanse of the Lone Star State. He celebrated one Christmas Day by drilling a fellow gambler between the eyes in a saloon brawl. More than once he was trapped, even thrown into jail, but slipped away, usually with the aid of furious-riding, dead-shot friends and kinfolk.

Hardin seemed to bear a charmed life. The story is told of a fine spring day when he walked out of a saloon into a squad of troops. He grinned devilishly. A leveled six-shooter sprang into each hand. "Stand still!" he commanded, still smirking. "Them as don't move won't get hurt. I'm ridin' out of town an' I don't aim to have company."

With that he backed over to the hitching post. Untying his horse, he vaulted into the saddle and was off. Hoofs clattered up the dusty village street. Luckily for the preacher's son, his mount was fresh, while those of the troopers had traveled far without rest. A faded brownish copy of the old *Daily News* of Denison, Texas, is authority for the fact that on one occasion Hardin was on his way to Austin as a prisoner surrounded by three guards, who did not watch him very closely on account of his youth, and fled at night after murdering all three in their sleep.

ANOTHER story has it that in the course of his wandering, Hardin was caught by a McLennan County posse in Texas and was about to be hanged but in some unexplained manner escaped with the noose still around his neck. It is a matter of history that Wes's brother Joe, his wife's brother, Brown Bowen, and several cousins of the Hardins were hanged for various murders, in some of which Wes had taken part, but Wes himself never stretched a rope.

Of average height, five feet nine, Hardin might have been seen in goatskin leggings, in buckskin breeches, or in broadcloth pants stuffed into boots. At times he was quite a Beau Brummel. The boots would be of bright hue and the Texas sun would turn to fire the silver trimmings on leather holsters, saddle, and bridle. Hardin's spurs, too, were ornate and often made of glistening silver. A gay scarf or red bandana around the neck set off the large cowboy hat.

For the seizure of John Wesley Hardin, alive or dead, the State of Texas offered $4000 in cash, a sizeable reward for the mid-seventies. The killer himself was rather proud of it. Detectives, soldiers, officers of the law, and private citizens from far and near tried to collect this money. It was not until Hardin had slain Charlie Webb, a deputy sheriff, in Comanche village in 1874, that the formidable Texas Rangers were put on his trail and kept after him for three long years with bulldog tenacity.

L. H. McNelly, possibly the most colorful of all Ranger captains, realized that his health was failing, even while he was still young, and wanted to crown his spectacular career by arresting Hardin. When he heard that the preacher's son and a pal, Jim Taylor, would visit a certain county, he said, "If they come, we will get them, no matter how many horses we have to kill in the chase."

But McNelly fell sick and assigned one of his sergeants, John B. Armstrong, to the case. Armstrong was handsome, with large whiskers and a large goatee. While recuperating from a bullet wound in the leg, he heard that a man claiming to be Hardin was downing whisky in a local bar. He invited the man to a drink, then arrested him, but learned to his chagrin that the prisoner was not the noted outlaw. Enraged at being tricked by a common drunk posing as Hardin, he asked for—and received—the assignment to work on the Hardin case until he closed it.

In this he was aided by a fellow Ranger, Jack Duncan, who as a Chicago detective years before had learned the fine art of tracking down criminals. Duncan was gifted with patience. He knew the search would be long and painstaking. Hardin had dropped out of sight. Not only that, but his many kinsfolk were close-mouthed and trigger-itchy. The job had to be handled with utmost care.

Duncan rented a modest farm in DeWitt County, Texas, adjoining that of Hardin's father-in-law, Neal Bowen, and settled down to till the soil. Getting acquainted with Bowen and winning his confidence was a slow process. The old man bristled with suspicion. But after a year and a half Duncan finally made friends with him.

One day the detective went over to his neighbor's farm and said casually, "I'll give you twenty dollars for that old wagon in your barn."

"'Tain't mine," replied Bowen. "I'm keepin' it for a feller."

"When do you reckon on seein' him?"

"I dunno, but I might write an' ask him if he wants to sell. That wagon ain't doin' nobody any good where she is now."

So Bowen wrote a letter and mailed it. Duncan haunted the post office every day thereafter until the answer came. He was rewarded by hearing the postmaster say, "Got a letter for your neighbor, Mr. Bowen. Mind takin' it to him on your way home?"

The Ranger smiled and put the letter in his pocket. It was postmarked "Pollard, Ala." As soon as he knew he could not be seen, he deftly opened the envelope without tearing it, and read the message. Th signer, "John," authorized Bowen to sell the wagon and added these tell-tale words, "Jane joins me in sending love." Duncan was aware that Hardin had a wife named Jane. He resealed the envelope and delivered it to his neighbor.

Three days passed. Then Bowen ambled over to his house and said, "That letter you brung me the other day came from the feller that owns the wagon. Says he'll sell it for twenty dollars."

Duncan paid for the wagon and took possession. He reasoned to himself: Pretty soon that farmer will send the money to Alabama. He watched the post office, generally keeping out of sight. Sure enough, the old man mailed another letter. As soon as Bowen had gone, the detective went inside.

"I jes' mailed a letter to Pollard, Alabama," he told the postmaster, "but I think I wrote the wrong name on the envelope. Please let me see it a minute."

The postmaster handed him the letter. it was addressed: "Mr. J. H. Swain, care of Sheriff Neal McMellon of Escambia County, Pollard, Ala." That was all he wanted to know. Hardin had adopted the alias "J. H. Swain," and Sheriff McMellon was a kinsman of his.

"Thanks," said Duncan, returning the letter to the postmaster. "I had it right after all."

The Ranger reported his findings to Sergeant Armstrong. Together they worked out a plan. To divert suspicion of their real intention, the sergeant rode into DeWitt County and arrested Duncan on a murder charge. Then the two Rangers traveled by rail to Pollard. There they learned that their quarry had gone to Pensacola, Florida. Armstrong sent a wire to Austin, asking the adjutant general to send him warrants and requisition papers under both names, Hardin and Swain.

WITHOUT waiting for them to arrive, they boarded a train that took them to Pensacola on the night of August 22, 1877. They located Hardin by the simple process of making a round of saloons and gambling houses. In this they were assisted by a deputy sheriff, A. J. Purdue, and a railroad man, W. D. Chipley. Then Purdue and Chipley got into a poker game with Hardin and learned that he, with four friends, would take a train back to Alabama the following afternoon.

Armstrong decided that the best way to arrest the killer was by waiting until the five members of the Hardin gang had actually boarded the train. That, in the absence of extradition papers, would simplify the matter greatly. So they kept a close surveillance. They watched the killer walk into a coach, glancing furtively around, and seat himself beside an open window near the front.

The trap was now ready to spring. Armstrong climbed leisurely onto the front platform of the car, while Duncan and Purdue cut off escape from the rear. But Hardin was wary. He saw Armstrong come in, holding a six-shooter. This he recognized instantly as a Colt .45 with a seven-inch barrel, a frontier type used mostly in the Lone Star State.

"Texas, sure as hell!" he exclaimed, reaching for his own weapon.

The killer, who was lightning swift on the draw, lost out in this crisis because his pistol somehow became entangled in his suspenders. Armstrong strode rapidly down the aisle, his .45 leveled at Hardin. "Surrender, in the name of the law!"

Hardin's seat-mate fired. The bullet bored a hole in the Ranger's hat. Armstrong shot him through the heart. The man rushed past the sergeant into the vestibule, down the steps, staggered a few paces, and fell dead. Meanwhile, determined to take his prisoner alive, Armstrong grabbed his six-shooter. Hardin kicked him backward into an empty seat. The Ranger retaliated with a pistol-butt blow on the head, and the Texas killer lost consciousness for two hours.

By this time, Duncan and the deputy had come up from the rear of the car. They overpowered and disarmed the remaining three men of Hardin's gang. When the train reached Whitney, Alabama, Armstrong telegraphed to the adjutant general of Texas:

"Arrested John Wesley Hardin, Pensacola, Florida, this P.M. He had four men with him. Had some lively shooting. One of their number killed. All the rest captured. Hardin fought desperately. Closed in and took him by main strength. Hurried ahead the train then leaving for this place. We are waiting for a train to get away on. This is Hardin's home (territory) and his friends are trying to rally men to release him. Have some good citizens with me and will make it interesting."

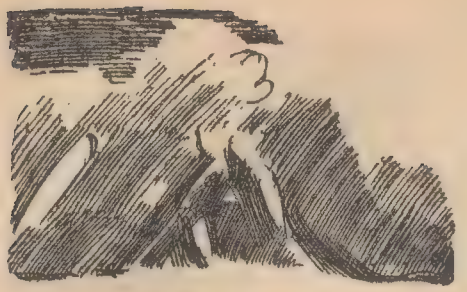
The next day they reached Montgomery, Alabama, but still no warrant nor extradition papers had arrived. Armstrong sent urgent telegrams to the adjutant general asking, "What's the matter?" He soon found himself in legal hot water over his failure to get those papers, but managed to hold his prisoners until they finally arrived.

A month later, Hardin was put on trial at Comanche, Texas, for the murder of Charlie Webb. Rangers guarded the courthouse inside and out to insure a fair trial. The jury took one hour to reach a second-degree verdict. Hardin was sent to prison at Huntsville for twenty-five years of hard labor.

But the once-dreaded killer did not serve his full term. As convict No. 7109, he professed to reform and began studying law. Then in 1893, shortly after his wife's untimely death, he was pardoned by a sympathetic governor. Admitted to the bar, he practiced law for a few months, and then reverted to his old ways. Memories of a wild, exciting youth were too much for him.

In some respects he was very much like another preacher's son, Jesse James, and he died the same way, with a bullet in the back of his head. John Selman fired it. The year was 1896, the occasion was an El Paso saloon brawl involving a woman, and the victim's age was forty-two.

Nobody knows how much lead John Wesley Hardin carried in his body. Besides three fresh wounds, he had ten old bullet scars and unmistakable evidence of two knife slashes.



THE COWARD

By

PERRY ADAMS

ILLUSTRATED BY
EVERETT RAYMOND KINSTLER

I CLIMBED out of the plane and walked across the muddy, half-frozen field. On that March morning in 1944, battered England was dour under a heavy, low ceiling; flying down to Plymouth we had briefly broken out of it into weak sunshine, gone again now.

From the administration building a British sergeant came at the double. He slithered to a stop in the muck and gave one of their odd salutes.

"Captain Clark, sir?"

"Yes."

"Major Trevor's unavoidably delayed, sir. An hour or two, perhaps."

Trevor, of British Intelligence, was to take me to the man I'd come down to see —the already legendary figure, Onnam. In London we had sifted through available British and American personnel, and the famous English spy seemed obviously our best bet for the one-man job in hand. *Overlord*—the invasion of Normandy—was in the making, and there was some specialized data we had to have. My job was to pass on to Onnam, verbally, detailed instructions from the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

"Nice 'n warm in the officers' mess," the sergeant was saying, with a hint of pride. "Care t'wait there, sir?"

"I'll do a personal errand, instead," I said. I'd been planning to sandwich it in after the business with Trevor. I fished an envelope out of my pocket and pointed to the Plymouth return address. "Know where that is, Sergeant?"

He glanced down, then gave me a quick look. "Why—why, yes, sir."

"Is something wrong?" I asked.

"Wrong, sir? Oh no! It isn't far. Our jeep'll take you there in a jiffy."

I'd always kept Noon's address, and I'd written him from London the moment I learned of the impending trip to Plymouth. My letter seemed a long shot: After eight years and with a war on, looking up British friends at ancient addresses was apt to prove a fine waste of time. But

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Far down the course, where nothing should have been at that instant, a figure moved.

Noon's reply came promptly. He was still living in the same old spot with his mother, he said, and would be delighted to see me. The letter carried no hint of his war effort. For a very special reason, I'd been speculating over that.

Noon's case, you see, was a strange one. When I first knew him, he had been established as an instructor at Hobson's, the well known British army tutoring school. That efficient if slightly cockeyed foundry of forced learning was tacked like a random leaf on a wet wall high on the Glion escarpment, a thousand feet above Territet and Montreux, Lake of Geneva. As a Yank preparing for Yale, I must have seemed an oddity at this English crammer's in Switzerland. The reason was an uncle, my closest living relative, incurably ill at a nearby sanitarium.

Noon's first name was a bit out of the ordinary—Jarman. At Hobson's they had switched that to *German* because Noon spoke the language so flawlessly. His inspiration was a Fraulein encountered, I believe, during a summer vacation on the Continent in Oxford days. I could recall a big picture of her Noon kept on his dresser—a dreamy ash blonde, Else somebody. She was in his blood, that Else. Long after my time at Hobson's, friends wrote me that Noon and she continued to be engaged; at last I heard they were to be married the following Christmas. But that was 1939. In September, Mr. Hitler marched into Poland—and a good many plans were changed.

Remote as all that seems, now, getting back to Hobson's, where I knew Noon in 1936, is literally stepping back into another life. In that heavily British atmosphere, I remember that the big news after the first of the year was the death of King George V, and the succession of the Prince of Wales; it was to be the memorable year of the three kings. Over here, the Supreme Court had just upset Triple-A; to me, poked off in Switzerland, the far-reaching Agricultural Adjustment Act seemed pretty dusty stuff—about as dusty as the memory of it this minute!

I told you Hobson's was a slightly cockeyed place. You did such whimsical things as drinking red wine at breakfast; there were no rules and no sharp lines between a young faculty and rather old students. I liked Noon and often went around with him. This explains how we happened to be together on the afternoon of the accident which so greatly changed him.

IF YOU'RE familiar with the Montreux-Territet scene in winter, you are almost bound to know the Col Sonloup run at Les Avants. It's way back in the hills, of course—a train trip of some twenty minutes from the lake. A funicular takes you from Les Avants station to the very top of the Col and it's a long, long way down. We used individual steel "skeletons" on that course, and both four-place and two-place bobsleds—the latter called "boblets."

The critical day, Noon and I were on a boblet. Alternating with the steering, we made three runs, then went up again for our fourth and final. As the afternoon wore on, the air had become dead still. I remember how cold it was in the open bob truck, attached to the funicular. As we waited at the takeoff, the dying sun lighted an unforgettable view clear down to the lake, with the Rhone Valley behind it. The icy immensity of the distant *Dents du Midi* was pink stained in the sun's last rays, while the sky behind that flaming multiple peak was a soft, fading green. Off to our left and far below, a miniature train snaked in and out between blue-white hills.

Noon, who never wore a hat, ran a hand through his mane of black hair and pointed. "There's our train back to Montreux."

"If they hold us up much longer we'll miss it," I said.

It was Noon's turn to steer. An instant later the attendant gave us the all-clear signal and I pushed off. Now that the sun was going, the course was lightning fast. We swirled high on the first big curve—flashed almost up to the now empty spectators' benches. We were just out of that turn, leveling off, when far down the course, where nothing living should have been at that instant, a black dot moved—unmistakably moved in the twilight, across the right of way.

Noon shouted for the brake. But I'd seen, too, and was already straining at the powerful levers. The big steel teeth

gouged a crackling white froth along the polished ice; but at that speed, the pace was only checked. The dot seemed to sweep up to us. Abruptly it was more than a dot: the figure of a little girl.

On this narrow length of straightaway the run was banked only enough to give it shape. For an agonizing instant it seemed that the confused child would manage to scramble out of the way. She raised her foot for the final step over the low ice wall—slipped—slid back squarely in our path . . .

Well, Noon's reaction to the tragic accident seemed normal enough at first—if my own feelings were a fair guide. We were stunned with grief, shaken to the very core. "There should have been some way to avoid hitting her," Noon kept muttering. But the thing was done, part of the past; nothing could change it. At last time began to get in its work—for me; with Noon it was otherwise. I tried—we all tried—to snap him out of it. Our efforts proved futile. Instead of getting over the thing, he grew worse.

"Just leave me alone," he'd say. He gave up sports of every kind—wouldn't even go skating, for fear of falling. The next stage was even worse. Everyone at Hobson's used the funicular between Glion and Territet as a matter of course; it was part of our daily life, like taking a trolley. But because of some imagined weakness in the mechanism, Noon couldn't be dragged on that funicular. Perhaps the final degradation came when he gave up shaving with the straight razor he'd always used. In the course of a few weeks this likable, worthwhile Englishman was transformed into a spineless, craven mess. It was horrible.

For a long time I refused to accept the change. "There's got to be a way to get your nerve back," I told him, over and over. But no ordinary formula seemed any good. Poor Noon appeared to be completely sunk.

And he was worse, if that were possible, when at the end of the school year I returned to America. At college, I was sometimes reminded of Noon and his trouble when letters reached me from Hobsonites who had run across him.

I was a junior at New Haven when war came. In those first days, Noon came into my mind more vividly than for some time. Had he managed to get hold of himself—at last? He remained well within military age. If still the victim of the terrible complex, what would happen to him, say, in combat?

THE staff jeep rolled into a rather mean little street of attached houses—long rows of them, each fronted by a small square of fenced in, garden bordered lawn, at this season brown and forlornly untidy.

"'Ere we are, sir," the driver said. We'd arranged that he was to return in an hour.

Noon was already framed in a doorway exactly like all the rest.

"Jack—Jack Clark," he called out. His black hair was unruly, just as I remembered it, but he seemed older and thinner.

"It's been a mighty long time," I said.

He stepped aside so that I could pass into the house. Behind him in the dimly lighted hall I saw a woman. As my eyes adjusted, I noticed that she had a rather wild mop of hair and the same high cheekbones and forehead as Noon. We moved into a small, stiff living-room, stuffy with Victorian gee-gaws, and sat down on slippery horsehair chairs. In the better light, the woman's resemblance to Noon was even more marked: the gray eyes, peering and rather intense, were identical. She could be no one but the mother of whom he had often spoken at the lake.

"Is this the American gentleman you mentioned?" she asked.

He introduced us.

She leaned forward, studying me. "I suppose you know about Jarman?"

"We've been out of touch a long time," I said.

"Jarman's a coward," she snapped. "Oh, there's some poppycock about a punctured eardrum and flat feet keeping him out of the armed forces. Flat fiddlesticks! A good part of the time he lolls here, doing absolutely nothing, while the boys and girls he grew up with are in uniform, dying for England. Jarm's a white-livered slacker—a rotter. He isn't even an air raid warden!"

Fumbling in a reticule, suddenly she stood up. With a swift movement, she flicked some light object toward her son.

It struck his knee, fluttered to the floor. A white feather.

"Mother!" Noon cried.

The whole thing was ridiculously overdramatic, of course. I'd heard of people being given the white feather in the earlier war; now, somehow, the gesture seemed hopelessly out of date. Yet there was nothing corny in the acid contempt behind the act; the agony in that woman's distorted face would have moved a stone.

"Oh, God," she croaked. "If only they'd let me take your place." The door slammed behind her.

"I—I'm sorry," Noon muttered out of a heavy silence.

I made a series of deprecating sounds. A kind of cliché of comfort. You can't cover up a thing like that with words.

"The whole town's written me off as no good," he muttered. "No one speaks to me any more. I—I suppose Mother's been waiting for a chance like this—a chance to humiliate me before some old friend."

"Is it still Les Avants?" I asked. He made no reply and I added, "You've never been able to shake off that—that accident?"

"Let me tell you something," he said roughly. But he did not go on.

"Yes?" I prompted.

He shook his head. "Let's talk about something else."

So we did. There was a real bond between us—the bond of that magic lake. And although embarrassment hung heavy over us, we spoke of Hobson's, of Montreux, Territet, Glion and Caux and of the things we had done there and the people we'd known. Of course, I had known his girl, Else, only from her picture, but he had so constantly mentioned her that she was indelibly associated with the period. I kept waiting for him to speak of her now, but he never said a word. Under the circumstances, it seemed better not to open the subject. Presently my jeep rolled up to the curb; we both saw it through the window.

"Well," I said, trying to hide my relief. We stood up, and in that moment I felt sorrier for old Noon—who wasn't so very much older than I—than for anyone I'd ever known.

"Well—" he echoed.

"Noon," I blurted, "don't forget I knew you *before* that accident." I felt a tremendous compulsion to let him know that I understood; I longed to get across the idea of my fundamental liking for him; to tell him that all this business changed nothing.

"The same silly old Yank," he mumbled—and I knew then that he understood what I was trying to say.

We shook hands stolidly—perhaps almost furtively—then I was out in the street again, sitting in the jeep. It began to move. I turned my head vaguely in the direction of Noon's door, waved. . . .

BACK AT the flying field, Trevor was already waiting. I had known him casually in the line of duty ever since coming overseas. We had an early lunch in the almost deserted mess, then he led me out to his car. The object of my visit hadn't even been mentioned.

"I half thought we might be meeting Onnam here," I said.

"You mean, because we'd be flying him to France?" He shook his head. "Not this time. He's still got a bad leg from a previous jump."

Although Onnam's mission was inspired by the Combined Chiefs, the burden of getting the famous spy to his destination was wholly in British hands.

"How *are* you getting him over?" I asked.

"The method's pretty grim," Trevor said. "You'll see."

"Everyone in London has some different story to tell about Onnam," I said, as we rolled away from the field.

"The man's a wizard. You know about his stunt with Rommel in North Africa, of course?"

"Only that he was there; none of the details."

"Onnam's never given out any. We know he turned up as a liaison officer between Rommel's headquarters and one of the Panzer divisions. Just stop and think of the iron nerve such an impersonation demanded! The confusion that marvelous blighter created and the information he brought back—even the little we know of how he accomplished it makes an incredible story."

By now we were in a poorer section of the town and presently I saw masts. We turned into a heavily guarded shipyard. Trevor drove on for some distance, then parked near a small rust-covered freighter, obviously being made ready for a voyage.

"Here we are," he said. "See that long rise off there behind you? That's Plymouth Hoe. The ghosts of Drake and Frobisher will be watching today. Those two have been better publicized than Onnam will ever be, but they are no greater heroes."

At the head of the gangplank we were met by a short, dark man in naval uniform.

"Ah, Captain," Trevor said. "This is the officer we expected. Captain Clark of Joint Intelligence."

"Onnam's in my cabin, changing his clothes," the captain said. "He should be along any minute."

"This ship's manned by a Royal Navy crew, and a very special one, at that," Trevor explained. "Every man jack's a volunteer from the captain down. The ship's loaded with a general cargo for Portugal, but if we have any luck, it'll fall into German hands. We've done everything possible to insure the capture—eh, Captain?"

"I hope those wireless messages haven't laid it on too thick," the other growled.

"The enemy's need for tonnage is so great that they'll be bound to investigate," said Trevor. "The ship should be intercepted off the coast of France. They'll take her to the nearest port and intern the crew, who have been drilled for weeks to give out a most sincerely misleading account of our forthcoming invasion."

"Fine, up to a point," I said. "But what about Onnam? You can't mean you're deliberately letting him be interned with the others?"

Trevor and the captain exchanged a brief grin.

"Scarcely," said Trevor.

THEY led me far down into the bowels of the ship. In a certain section the cargo had been shifted to leave an irregular passage, cleverly contrived to seem a mere quirk of arrangement. At the end of the passage we came upon two men waiting with riveting guns. I noticed that some plates had been removed between two of the ship's ribs, exposing a section of the actual "outer skin." The forbidding hole gave off an oily reek.

I gulped. "You can't mean they—you don't mean Onnam's going to—"

Trevor nodded. "But the rivets that are going back are fakes. They are mere heads, with the bolts or pins sheared almost entirely away. After the ship is docked, Onnam will wait for the right moment to push up a plate and escape. A powerful jack to move the plate is already in there."

"Everything," the captain added, "except Onnam himself."

"You mean," I said, "he's going to be put down there *now?*"

The captain shrugged. "Who knows when we'll be intercepted? It may be no more than an hour or so after we clear port."

"Or a day or a week," I said. "The poor devil may smother."

"He knows that," Trevor said.

"Or if the cargo shifts after capture, he might never have a chance to get out."

"He knows that, too."

"And if you're bombed or mined before the interception, you might sink before the plate could be removed."

"There are all sorts of possibilities," the captain said softly, "and Onnam realizes them."

"There ought to be some simpler way," I growled. "Men shouldn't be subjected to a thing like this—even in wartime!"

"The idea," Trevor remarked, "is Onnam's. When we decided against a parachute jump because of his leg, he had the choice of several ways of getting across, but chose this ship."

As we spoke a sudden silence fell, and I realized that the winches had stopped. The captain glanced at his watch.

"We seem to be loaded. I want to catch this tide. How long will it take to pass on your instructions to Onnam, Captain Clark?"

"Five minutes," I said.

"He's overdue," the captain grunted.

We stood there silently, after that. In the light of a single electric lantern, our

(Continued on page 129)

That crazy Injun was makin' passes with the knife and hatchet, and the dude was sweatin' enough to float a canoe.

Charley Hoe Handle

WHEN HORSE JENKINS, the warden of Stick County, started down the path to Clear Lake he didn't have no special idea in mind. He even stopped his car, with *Cons. Dept.* wrote on it in letters six inches high, where it could be seen from Charley Hoe Handle's fishin' shanty.

Horse got out and walked the five hundred feet to the shanty, and all he aimed to do was have a look at Clear Lake. There was a man, a city sport if Horse was any judge of fishermen, castin' off Charley's pier and he could really handle a fly rod. He had his back to Horse, and as Horse watched the man pulled in a small trout. Horse stood real still, waitin' to see what would happen. The city sport

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

Goes Native

By JIM KJELGAARD

unhooked the undersized trout and let it go.

"Nice goin', Mister," says Horse.

The sport turned around. "Oh, hello."

"Hello," says Horse. "How's fishin'?"

"No good, I'm afraid. There are plenty of trout, but very few of them measure up to the legal length."

"Clear Lake's filled with little trout," says Horse. "You want somethin' big, go over to Plum Lake."

"Thanks for the tip. I'll try it."

"See anybody around?" says Horse.

"Nobody except you. The cabin appears to be vacated for the time being."

Horse turned around and looked at Charley's shanty, a one-roomer with a wide porch. There was a ice-box on the

porch, and Horse sort of glanced at that because he was used to lookin' at ice boxes and figurin' what might be in 'em. Of course there wouldn't be nothin' illegal in Charley's. The old Injun was too smart to keep the stuff he poached where anybody could find it. But just because he was in the habit of lookin' into ice-boxes, Horse walked up and looked into Charley's.

And there, right on top of the ice, was more than seventy undersized trout.

Horse Jenkins' eyes got big as saucers. He thunk of all the traps he had laid for Charley Hoe Handle, and all the times he'd tried to ketch the old Injun poacher. This couldn't be right. Horse looked away and back again. The trout was still there, and Horse steadied hisself against the ice-box.

He couldn't take it all at once. All these years of chasin' Charley Hoe Handle, and now he had him clean! Horse started to grin, and his grin got bigger as he thunk of just what this meant. He could fine Charley ten dollars for each trout that wasn't seven inches long, and if Horse was any judge of fish not one of 'em was that long. Then twenty was the possession limit, and for every trout Charley had over that Horse could paste him another ten dollars.

Horse's eyes got sort of dreamy. There was more than twelve hundred dollars worth of fines settin' right in that ice-box, and if Charley had his usual amount of cash he'd have maybe a dollar and twenty cents. He'd sit in jail for a year.

"Those fish are not legal," somebody said.

Horse turned around to face the city sport, who had come up on the porch behind him, but Horse only half saw the sport. He was too busy thinkin' about what he was goin' to do to Charley. The sport talked again, and he seemed mad.

"If this is your cabin you should be ashamed of yourself! It's game hogs like you who ruin fishing!"

"It ain't my cabin," says Horse. "It belongs to an Injun named Hoe Handle, and I'm a game warden. Now that I've got my hooks in the old renegade—"

"Ugh! Pale-faces don't move!" somebody else says.

Horse turned around to see Charley Hoe Handle at one end of the porch. Horse didn't move. Charley had a look in his eye and a .30-30 in his hands.

THE CITY sport was grinnin' silly-like, as though this was sort of a game Horse and Charley was puttin' on for him. Horse, who had knowed Charley for a good many years, didn't do nothin' foolish. Charley was a poacher and a general all-around hellion, but when he made up his mind to do somethin' he hauled off and done it.

"Now looka here, Charley," Horse says, "just because I've got you red-handed—"

"Pale-face talk too much," says Charley. "Pale-face don't shut up, Injun scalp now."

"Charley, have you gone nuts?"

"He's bluffing," the city sport says. "I'll prove it."

The sport stepped towards Charley, but he didn't take no more'n one step. Charley's .30-30 blasted. The wind from the slug parted the dude's hair.

"He—he's not bluffing!" the sport says.

"No," says Horse. "He ain't."

Horse stood real still. He had often wondered what Charley would do if he found himself in a hole he couldn't wriggle out of, and now he knowed. Charley would kill; there was a killin' light in his eyes. Horse done some quick figurin'. Seventy trout was a small matter now. When he finally got out of this, as get out he would, he would stick Charley with resistin' an officer and intent to kill. That should be good for at least five years.

"Pale-face come," says Charley, crookin' his finger at the sport.

"I—" the sport begins.

"Go," says Horse. "Our turn will come."

The sport, whose face was really pale now, walked towards Charley. Charley didn't loosen his hold on the .30-30 even a little bit. He pointed at one of the pine logs that held his porch roof up.

"Pale-face stand against post," says he.

The sport done what he was told. Keepin' an eye on Horse, and ready to use the .30-30, Charley took a hank of rope out of one of his pockets and looped it over the dude's arms. Then he tied it to the post.

The sport was sweatin' when he looked at Horse, but Horse couldn't help him none right now. Charley swung his rifle at Horse.

"Pale-face stand against post," says he.

"Charley," says Horse, "when I get out of this I'm goin' to tear you apart inch by inch an' feed you to the carp! I'm—"

"Pale-face hurry!"

Horse hurried, there just ain't no argu-in' with a .30-30. Charley tied him up so tight that Horse couldn't even wiggle a finger; the old Injun was handy with ropes. Then Charley went into the shanty.

When he come out again he wasn't wearin' nothin' except a pair of ragged under-pants. There was a knife stuck in his belt and he had a little hatchet in his hands.

Horse Jenkins had thunk that he had seen everything there was to see in Stick County. But he hadn't never seen nothin' like this. Charley Hoe Handle, pattin' his hand against his mouth and yellin' like Injuns are s'posed to, started dancin' around and around the dude. With his other hand he was makin' passes with the hatchet, and after a couple of minutes he started makin' passes at the dude. Horse closed his eyes, and when he opened them again he expected to see the sport's nose gone. It was still there but the dude must of thought it wasn't. He was squirmin' in his ropes and sweatin' enough to float a canoe.

"Stop! Please stop!" says he.

"Wa-wa-wa-wa-wa-wa-wa-!" yells Charley.

"Stop, you crazy fool!" Horse says.

"Wa-wa-wa-wa-wa-wa-wa-!"

Horse strained at his own ropes, but when Charley Hoe Handle tied somebody they stayed tied. The crazy old Injun was still wa-wa-in', and he was makin' passes with both the knife and hatchet now. If the ropes hadn't of held him up, the sport would of fell over. Then, after maybe about five minutes, Charley drew back a little. He looked real pleased.

He went to his wood pile, picked up a lot of little chips, and busted some dried branches over his knee. Charley started pilin' his fire wood around the sport.

"No!" the sport screams. "No! Not that!"

Charley went right on buildin' his fire. For a second Horse couldn't do nothin' except stare. There wasn't no doubt at all that Charley aimed to burn his prisoner at the stake. Charley struck a match.

"No!" says the sport. "Don't! I'll do anything!"

Charley stepped back and looked at the sport. For the first time he looked like the Injun Horse knowed.

"Anything?" says Charley.

"Yes! Anything!"

"Then s'pose you tell the warden how them trout got in my ice-box."

"I put them there! It was the nearest place I could get rid of them when I saw a warden's car stop!"

"And I had nothin' to do with it?"

"No! I did it!"

Charley looked at Horse Jenkins. "Heard enough?"

"Enough," says Horse.

"Then," says Charley, "I might as well let you go."

Charley cut the ropes, and Horse stretched his arms. He looked at the old poacher, still half-minded to tear him apart. Then he sort of grinned.

"You could of told me they weren't your trout," says he.

"Yeah," says Charley, "and you would of believed me, wouldn't you?"

"No," says Horse.

"Well," says Charley, "another routine day is passin'. Lucky for me I pussy-footed back to the cabin an' heard you two talkin'. A man never knows what will happen while he's away. Say, Horse, if you go past my cousin Bill's house will you drop these off? Bill's kid left 'em here when he come to fish with me."

Charley tossed the knife and hatchet at Horse, but Horse knowed better than to try ketchin' 'em. They hit the ground and bounced.

"Rubber," Charley Hoe Handle grinned. "Fifteen cents apiece in the dime store at Beaver Junction."

BATTLE PROBLEM

ILLUSTRATED BY
JOSEPH A. FARREN

Captain Anderson had formed the company in line across the canyon. "Draw—sabers!" His command was clear, even above the firing.

By FREDERICK WILKINS

THEY were all tired, hot and tired, sweaty, worn with riding and the let-down excitement of the fight. Leading their mounts, "A" Company was walking towards the picket lines; moving slowly to the right, the ambulance was heading for the dispensary. Bullet holes in the canvas top let sunlight through on the bodies inside, answer to the people who claimed Apaches couldn't shoot . . .

Captain Anderson's fine English boots lolled from side to side as the wheels dipped in the ruts. They were fine boots —like the captain, well made, polished, carefully cut, strangely out of place in the desert. Moran had noticed the boots the first time he ever saw the captain.

It was a day much like this one, with the sun just over the top of Whiskey Butte; there was even a trace of breeze in the air. First Sergeant Owens and Private Moran had met the new captain that morning.

"I am sure the captain is tired from his trip," suggested Sergeant Owens. "If the captain wishes, I will have his luggage

moved to quarters and bring over the company records after he has rested."

"Duty is a fine sounding word, Sergeant," and Captain Anderson's words came out slowly and distinctly and took the hide from a man. "In the Army it is also a muchly abused word. It is your duty to do whatsoever I may require. I require only help in unloading my books. I will not require any help in the administration of this company."

Sergeant Owens stood very erect, his back like the flat of a saber. No one in the company knew his age, but he must have been half again as old as the captain, maybe more. Under the Arizona sun his skin had turned to leather, his brown hair bleached blond, or maybe the gray was showing more now. Owens was not a handsome man, but he had regular features, good eyes, and he was a man who looked a soldier.

Moran believed Owens was the best he had ever seen, and he had seen many good men: men in gray and men in blue, men who bent forward into the canister and Minié balls, following the flags up the long, rolling hills. There had been others since, once the big war stopped and they moved into the mountains and desert. He had sounded his bugle, and they had followed.

Owens' back became even straighter, if possible. "Yes, sir. Go with the captain, Moran."

Walking through the dust, the sun ate at their shirts; the sand glare broke the eye corners into wrinkled flesh. Captain Anderson wiped at his neck and mopped his head.

Moran eyed the wagon in wonder; the bed was full of books; there were books in boxes, loose books, papers tied in bundles. There were three carpet bags and a large trunk. Moran was certain no other officer had that many uniforms, and he knew for a fact that the entire post could not match the captain's books, nor the Department, for that matter.

"Does it ever get cool here?"

Moran took a strange delight in his reply. "Not here, sir."

"Hum. I'll want the books on shelves at once, Moran. Place them loosely—I'll arrange them according to title and subject matter."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Moran—"

"Sir?"

"The Army Quartermaster buys excellent cloth—washing won't ruin the fabric! And from now on this company will wear the hat level on the head."

THERE weren't enough timbers on the post to build a large chicken coop, but Moran used the skills of a long Army life and traded with Company "B" and managed to make shelves of a sort from old crates. Captain Anderson came in later and began placing the multicolored books on the shelves. There were books on strategy, weapons, the art of siegecraft, works by Mahan and Jomini, Napoleon and Hamley, Cook, books in French and German and English, even a small volume on the use of the lance in the Prussian and French war just over, this last written by Captain Anderson.

"It must be fine to read," Moran said later.

Owens nodded. "It passes the time and improves the mind. If the Apaches could read it would be a big help, but they can't. Here, post this—the captain orders an inspection tomorrow."

"A" Company talked about the inspection for some time. Captain Anderson walked along the line, pausing before each man; forty times he stopped, and forty times there was a correction. When that was through he had them ride for him.

Captain Anderson sat a horse like some statue; even Owens gave a smile of approval at the way the officer rode, the ease with which the mare took a hurdle. It was the only smile of approval that day. Man by man the captain had the company ride before him: this one was too far forward in the saddle, this one too slouched, one slid too much, stirrups too short. They would ride an hour each day, every day.

"This company will be the best in the American Army when I am finished," he told Sergeant Owens. "They will be the best dressed, the best riders and the best swordsmen. Being in this miserable post is no excuse for slovenly conduct."

Next day they started on dismounted saber drills, and Captain Anderson set up

dummies in the dry creek bed. Owens had been in the Department seven years and never seen an Apache sabered, but he kept quiet. After a week the company could hold a line like a ruler, sabering the dummies at the gallop.

Other officers weren't sure of the soundness of this, but it wasn't their affair. Anderson, after all, had an excellent record and had been sent to Europe as an observer; he had even written a book of his impressions. Some of the older officers said he reminded them of McClellan, with his books and studies of foreign wars. And they thought he would probably end a general officer, just as had the other.

Anderson certainly explained his ideas clearly enough. "I don't wish to cast any reflection on the work of the officers who commanded here before, but this Department needs a new concept of Indian combat. This situation is a battle problem—the Apache is a man, and man is destroyed by a disciplined machine. That is what we must have—a mounted machine. *Nothing* can stand before a saber line, once we get close enough for a charge."

"And *nothin'* can stand before a flock of rifle balls!"

They turned, the officers and the contract surgeon; the speaker was Gaines, the civilian chief scout.

"I beg your pardon, sir. Are you disagreeing with me?"

"Sure as hell am, Captain. This is Arizona, not France. You try using a saber on an Apache, man, an' you'll come back in a blanket."

Anderson flushed. "I know that certain Army personnel have great confidence in your ability, Mr. Gaines, but I can't believe your background over mine."

"Background! Hell, man, it's a question of common sense, not background. You think any Apache will give you a chance to form company front and charge up some *arroyo*? You're liable to spend a year fighting out here and never even *see* one!"

Anderson's voice was low. "Are you afraid of the Apaches, Mr. Gaines?"

Now Gaines flushed beneath his tan. "A sensible man is always afraid of being killed—foolish like."

"Perhaps we could get someone not afraid of being killed."

Gaines stood up and looked at Anderson. "That might be a good idea, Captain, since I was supposed to work with your company from now on. Good night, gentlemen," and he walked down the steps.

There was an outburst of talk. Anderson lit his pipe and waved his hand. "That is an example of what I mean—this department could stand a little overhauling. When officers of the Army must listen to civilian hunters and payroll padders the country is in a sad fix!"

SERGEANT OWENS wondered just what he would say to the captain about Gaines; after his first experience he had kept his tongue. In all honesty he admitted that the company was better now: the men rode well; their uniforms were as neat as the weather would allow; they saluted and drilled like an exhibition unit. Owens was man enough to admit that Anderson had done all this, would probably do more, but he must say something about Gaines. A man had a duty to talk sometimes.

Captain Anderson listened quietly. "I am glad you take such an interest in the company, Sergeant." He sat for a moment after Owens had finished. "I am aware of the advantages of guides; it just happens that I have already made provisions for native scouts. Do you have anything more to discuss with me?"

An hour later Moran burst into the orderly room and looked about to see if Owens was alone. "You know who we got for scouts? You heard yet? Them two Cibicu Apaches that used to stay with the hunters."

"You mean Caballero and Nina?"

Moran nodded excitedly. "Even Old Pedro heard about it an' is riding in to talk to the captain."

Owens shook his head. "Maybe he can talk sense."

Chief of the White Mountain Apaches, Old Pedro had been friends with the Army for several years; maybe he hated the Cibicus and Chiricahuas more than he did the whites, but anyway, whatever his reasons, he was a friend. The old man had helped before; maybe he could help again.

Pedro tried; he had a simple dignity as

he stood before Anderson and explained about the Cibicus. "The Cibicus hate you as much as Chiricahua do," he said slowly. "If you use Cibicu you do nothing. Let me send my young men. We go shoot Cibicu together. We do not kill all in one shoot, but we go again. In time there no more Cibicu. Then we shoot Chiricahua. *Then* there is peace."

Anderson waited until he was finished. "I appreciate your help, but I do not require aid from savages in conducting Army matters. Your ingenious proposal for getting Army help in fighting your enemies I must also refuse. I propose to treat one tribe as another. We will be friends with all."

"Captain fool," grunted Old Pedro and walked away.

Sergeant Owens watched him go. "Begging the captain's pardon—"

"Yes?"

"Nothing, sir."

LATER in the week several Mexican herders came across the line and complained about raids on their cattle and sheep; one was killed and a *ranchería* was burned out. There was always a certain amount of stealing by the Indians. They never considered it as theft, having a different set of ethics and hard put to make the reservation food supplies keep body and soul together. It wasn't more than a local nuisance until someone began making *tiswin* in the mountains; the bucks began drinking and singing at night, boasting of old deeds and talking about the days of Mangus Colorado and Cochise.

Once Gaines had caught a buck making *tiswin* and cut him into strips of meat and left him atop the rude still, but Gaines was gone now; the orders read to the reservation Apaches didn't make sense. Drinking continued, and the trouble signs multiplied. Matters balanced between loud talk and dangerous action. The post commander decided on a swing along the border, hoping to cut any tracks and pick up any parties raiding into Mexico. Sometimes a show of force before matters broke was all that was needed.

This left Anderson in temporary command of the post for several days; he divided his time between headquarters and "A" Company's orderly room. Sergeant Owens went twice daily with reports to headquarters, and on his afternoon visit passed barracks and noticed that someone was walking about inside. All men were supposed to be engaged in fatigue duties, and he went inside and found Caballero trying on clothing.

"What the devil are you doing here?"

Caballero was undersized, a wiry man-boy; twisting away he made a dive for the window. Owens caught him by the back of his oversize uniform shirt and hauled him back inside. The scout began yelling, and Owens listened patiently for a moment.

"I haven't lived in this wilderness for nothing, you little sneak. Remember that when you speak next time." With no show of anger he slapped the scout, rocking his head from side to side with heavy open-handed blows.

Half dragging the sullen Apache, he walked towards the orderly room and shoved him inside; Caballero shut up after his slapping and stumbled into the room, his face black with anger. The Apache came to attention and saluted.

Startled, Owens walked in. Captain Anderson had just walked in and was signing some papers. "What is it, Caballero?"

"I'll explain, with the captain's permission," Owens answered. "I was returning here and spotted someone in barracks. When I went inside I found this man stealing clothing."

Anderson turned. "What have you to say to this?"

Caballero shrugged. "You want find *tiswin?* I find *tiswin,* but no shells. I look for shells."

"That's an outright lie!" Owens burst in. "He damn well knows about scout's allowances and how to draw ammunition."

"No," shrugged Caballero. *"No sabe."*

"The man's a liar and a thief. The captain didn't know about these men when he selected them—"

"I don't make mistakes, Sergeant Owens. So, you think you can find this whiskey still?" and he turned to Caballero.

"With shells I find it."

"Good. I want to know the location and the number of men in the vicinity.

Sergeant Owens, see that they are properly equipped."

"Yes, sir," and Owens saluted.

The Apache drew a .45-70 for himself and one for Nina and a hundred rounds of ammunition. Caballero never quite looked at Owens while the issue was being made, but when he and Nina were riding out of the post he gave the sergeant a smile.

"That's the last of two good weapons," Owens said bitterly. "And I'd rather have him cuss me than smile."

THE scouts returned three days later, much to Owen's surprise. Caballero waved when he saw Owens and went in to see Anderson. It made Owens mad to see the little Apache salute; in his oversize blue shirt, the little scout did everything he saw the soldiers doing. They usually didn't fit into Army routine at all, but Caballero did and began telling how he found where the *tiswin* still was, up north of Cibicu Canyon.

"There are just a few of them, from what he says, but we will take the entire company for a training march. I want three days' rations prepared; we will take a light wagon and a water cask. And a hundred rounds per man."

When Captain Anderson started, he moved fast. Company "B" was still out, but they could be back before the other company returned. The sun was just turning the top of Whiskey Butte rose-red when they left the next morning; the two scouts led out, moving past the corrals, heading north for the hills. Captain Anderson and the Guidon came next, followed by the bulk of the company in column of two's; following was the wagon, guarded by two soldiers. They rode well now, no bent backs, no dragging feet, no saddle bouncing.

By noon they were well into the broken country, in a jumbled wilderness of mesas and buttes, fallen rocks, sand-scoured cliffs, a place of stunted trees and pebbled valley floors. The sun painted everything yellow-brown, drab, with only the clear sky and the sweat stained uniforms showing any trace of color. Always ahead, just out of arms reach, were the higher hills; by afternoon they could see the mountains change from blue to brown, even make out the broken crest that signified the Canyon.

Owens was riding beside Moran; in his mind he tried to remember Cibicu Canyon: about a half mile long; about a third of the distance between sheer rock walls, cliffs that rose three hundred feet in the air, where not even a lizard could find footing.

"I got a funny feeling," Moran complained. "My old man said that he could talk to the Little People; sometimes I think I can do the same thing."

"Sure," grunted Owens, and he rode ahead.

A normal Apache caught stealing in barracks would have lied out of it, just like Caballero. A normal Apache would try to run, just like Caballero. A normal Apache turned loose with a gun and ammunition would never be seen again—*not* like Caballero . . .

"Sir, begging the captain's pardon, but could the captain listen for a moment?"

Anderson halted his mount and mopped his face. "This is confounded hot country. What is the trouble?"

"Sir, this expedition has a strange look to me. Those two have a bad name. I'm afraid Caballero is trying to get at me for that barracks trouble and the whole company will suffer. The rim of Cibicu is probably—"

"Sergeant Owens, I do not wish to go through all that again. If you are afraid of a fight, you may return to the post."

Captain Anderson wheeled his mount and galloped back to the guidon. Bitterly Owens reflected that a man may know a fight will result in his death and still go forward, especially if his courage is questioned; men are strangely stupid about the matter of courage. He watched Cibicu widen, the gap open in the mountains, and he galloped over beside Moran, who had dropped back to the wagon.

"I may be doing the wrong thing, but I have to take a chance. Get your carbine out. When I fire at Caballero, drop Nina."

"It will be a pleasure," murmured Moran.

Captain Anderson held up his hand, signalled a halt. He waved Caballero forward, and the scout rode into the canyon, vanishing in the shadows. He was gone for some time, and when he returned he

waved his rifle and waved them on. There was a creaking of leather and the jangle of saber scabbards as the company moved into the canyon.

Cibicu was like a letter *L*. In some long past age part of the west wall had tumbled down, the huge boulders forming vast steps to the top of the canyon; part way was shale and loose earth, but most of the walls were rock. From about three hundred yards at the mouth, the walls closed in, until the sandy floor was barely a hundred yards across at the turn. The last part of the canyon was a box, with walls like the side of a room; there was even some overhang, as wind and sand and occasional flash floods had undercut the sheer rock. There were stories of old Indian fights here, and Owens wondered if there would be other spirits in the stone at dusk . . .

THE two Apaches were almost at the turn, the company strung out, well inside the canyon; the sandy floor muffled their passage, but echoes were forming up in the stone chambers. Drifting away from the column, Owens waved to Moran, who edged over towards the fallen cliff. Caballero and Nina were well in front now, examining the cliffs overhead; the gap between the soldiers and scouts was steadily increasing. Inside the narrow bend, the Apaches had left the company well behind. Owens spurred forward and dismounted; Moran followed him and knelt in the sand.

Owens was sweating; it was hot and sticky, but he would have sweated on the mountains, in the snow . . . suppose Caballero . . . *click* . . . *click* . . . the big hammer sounded like a hammer clashing on an anvil. The teamster was watching him curiously, as the wagon rolled by. He saw Captain Anderson open his mouth. Caballero was almost around the bend; he placed the sights in the scout's back.

There was a brief shimmer of heat waves; then the picture blurred under the shock of recoil. Smoke hid the company.

There was another *bang!*

Moran was cursing loudly, and men began yelling. Moving clear of the smoke, Owens saw that Caballero was a rag heap under the east cliff; Nina was not in sight. A spurt of sand flew in the air; there was a whine as a rifle ball smashed against stone and sang through the air. On the canyon rim smoke puffs hung and drifted away. Seconds later rifle sounds could be heard; echoes began taking up the battle.

"Ye gods! They're all atop the place!" yelled Moran. "An' me not hitting the dog! He opened the block on his weapon and shoved home another cartridge.

A ball struck Owens' mount, and the horse fell heavily, floundered in the sand. It was no time for pity. Running ahead, he tried to reach the company. By now the teamster had halted the wagon and was beside the horses, firing a rifle at the rim.

Captain Anderson had formed the company in line across the canyon. "Draw—*sabers!* His command was clear, even above the firing.

Sliding from his saddle, a soldier fell headlong into the sand; the horse shied for a moment and went along with the company. Sand and rock fragments were flying all about the company; rearing into the air, another horse fell sideways, throwing his rider clear.

"Steady, men! Forward, trot—"

The guidon bearer collapsed across the neck of his horse; the swallow tailed cloth fell sideways into the sand. Captain Anderson lifted his saber.

Owens ran behind the company line. "Dammit!" he screamed. "Wheel to the left and get under the rocks. Fight on foot!"

Confusion gripped the line; several men tossed their useless sabers away and spurred for the shelter of the landslide. "Run!" encouraged Owens. "Fight on foot!"

Anderson wheeled to the rear, pausing to shake the dead Guidon bearer clear. "Get back in line, you cowards! Owens, I'll see you shot for this!"

The ball made a little puff as it struck his shirt. Captain Anderson slumped forwards; his saber fell to the sand. He lay in the sand, his eyes on the clouds that fled across the canyon rim. A ball struck and showered him with sand; he didn't move. A riderless horse galloped crazily over him, and he made no move to protect his face.

Several soldiers had already reached the rocks and began firing. Protecting their mounts as best they could, they tried to find targets atop the canyon walls. Several more came in afoot, and the bulk of the company galloped up below the slide and dismounted. Several men were told off as horse holders; the rest began firing.

Owens lay behind a rock and caught his breath; another hundred yards and they would have been trapped; stones and timbers would have crushed them, and rifle balls picked up whatever was left. Caballero and Nina had almost brought it off. He stared out where Captain Anderson lay on the valley floor.

"Michaels, you and the three to your right fire on the opposite rim. Williams, take four men and start climbing to the top back of us. Cover us as we climb."

By using the fallen boulders, the soldiers had cover almost to the top; the rest of the way was a slippery race in the shale. Already some of the Cibicus had worked along the rim to get above the soldiers. Williams shot one, and the rest hid behind stones and trees.

A FEW men at a time, Owens sent the remainder of the company up the slope. Last man up, he again rested a bit and had his men spread out, start working along the rim. They fired and moved on, shoving fresh rounds in their weapons; there were a few shots in return and an occasional view of a running Apache.

It hadn't gone like the Cibicus had planned: Caballero had promised a quick victory, with plenty of weapons and cartridges as loot. They had killed some soldiers, but the surprise was gone; they were outnumbered now and being pressed hard. A buck here, another there, they vanished. The fire opposite the troops died out. Three had tied their horses too close and were spotted by Williams on the flank; in a hail of .45 balls the three Apaches tumbled in a pile.

The battle sounds stilled: the boom of trade muskets, repeaters crack, the wham of the .45-70's, men shouting and the constant play of the echoes. They swept the rim clear, but the Apaches had gone. Two dead were behind stones; there was one Williams had shot and the three dead in the pile near the horses. Blood on the ground said others had been hit. It was a typical fight: ambush, run. Three soldiers were dead, two hurt, two horses killed, several hurt, a half dozen lost.

Owens had them place the bodies in the wagon, cover them over with blankets. All the men who could ride had horses, but they were still two short—probably ran up the valley and were picked up by the Cibicus. He didn't bother to look for the *tiswin* still; it wouldn't be found today.

There was no talking on the way back; men slumped a bit and let the sun bake the tension from their tired backs. The outguards rode well out, but there was no trouble. It was almost night; reddish-brown changed to blue-black; the yellow sand was turning silver. Owens camped for most of the night, moving out an hour before sunrise.

Ahead, the stone barracks of the fort appeared, the shingles curling under countless suns. Horses were in the corrals; Company "B" had returned. Owens gave a sigh and looked back down the column. He called the company to attention. They marched in at attention, hot and tired, dusty, with knees out from the sharp rocks, their fine polish and creases gone under the fierce sand, but they rode in at attention, every man erect.

Dismissing the men in their area, Owens went to look for the post commander. There were a lot of reports to be made, many things some officer would have to do. Just ahead he saw the major peer into the back of the wagon and turn towards him. Owens gave his horse to Moran and saluted.

"Good God, man! What happened!"

"Well, sir, it was pretty confused." He bit his lip and looked at Moran, who had stopped and was listening.

"We were jumped in Cibicu Canyon, Major—our scouts played us false. Captain Anderson saw what had happened and rode out ahead and waved his saber a lot. I suppose the Apaches thought he was getting ready to attack them. Anyway, he drew their fire long enough for us to get under cover. He kept shouting for us to fight on foot. We dismounted and got atop the rim and drove them

(Continued on page 128)

A FACT STORY

The major opened his eyes and froze—his conqueror was a woman!

MORE DEADLY than the MALE

By ED DIECKMANN, Jr.

"When the Himalayan peasant meets the he-bear in his pride,
He shouts to scare the monster, who will often turn aside.
But the she-bear thus accosted rends the peasant tooth and nail.
For the female of the species is more deadly than the male."

—Kipling

●

INCREDULOUSLY, the major read the note his aide had handed him. As he finished he motioned the man to his side. "Listen to this, Lieutenant! From the Chevalier de St. Belmont. The one that keeps himself locked in his rooms.

"Sire: Since you have chosen to ignore my letter, appealing to the honor of an officer in the service of Louis the Fourteenth, and begging you leave this chateau as not being the proper place to stable EITHER horses or men—!

"Do you hear that?" The major flung himself out of his chair. "We capture this rebel, Count Belmont, quarter ourselves on his estate, as is our right, and now some upstart relative of his sends me THIS!"

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

Suddenly he stopped pacing the thick rug. "Ah—but listen to this. It gets better!

"I regret I must demand satisfaction. If you have the courage, be under the oak near the hedgerow at dawn tomorrow. I shall await your pleasure."

With an oath the major drew his saber, and, throwing the paper in the air, slashed at it viciously. As the fragments scattered about the room, he spat. "The Chevalier de St. Belmont! PAH!"

THE NEXT morning was cold and clear. The major and his two seconds, one of whom was his aide, shivered as their mounts pounded the turf, trailing vapor behind them. When they made out the oak tree, the major's heart quickened as he saw the lone figure already dismounting. As they drew up, he saluted, mockingly.

"Le Chevalier de St. Belmont?"

But the other, wearing a plumed hat that seemed strangely large, was silent. The only sound was the rasp of sabers coming out of their scabbards.

Even before they crossed blades, the major had picked his target: the lion's head in the Belmont coat-of-arms, squarely on his opponent's chest. With a skillful flourish the major attacked. He closed with every trick he knew, every lunge, slash and riposte he had learned on the battlefields of Europe. Yet in a few seconds he realized he had met an equally accomplished swordsman. True, he seemed slight and fragile, but his parrying was supernatural, his ripostes and counter-attacks like a devil's jest. The major was puzzled.

But suddenly his puzzlement changed to elation. The other was retreating as though tired, backing toward the oak. Now—try for that lion's head!

The major could never explain what happened next. But he had braced himself for a final lunge when, as delicately as though topping flowers, his opponent advanced, caught his point under the blade near the pommel, and whirled. It was the neatest disarmament the major had ever seen.

Unbelievingly he saw his weapon lying in the damp grass. Then he closed his eyes, waiting for death. Instead he heard a startled "NO!" from his aide. Tentatively, he opened his eyes to see both seconds staring at the victor. Off were the large hat and flowing cape. The major looked once, frozen into place. Then he bowed his head and reddened with the sunrise. For the figure without the cape was round and lovely. And the raven hair tumbling down was that of a woman!

Not a sound was heard until she spoke. "I, gentlemen, am the Countess de St. Belmont. My husband's house is in MY care till his return."

Contemptuously, she stepped back.

"Pick up your sword! But remember this! In the future, pay proper respect to the request of a lady!"

The major bent for his sword and left, his seconds bringing up the rear. If any had had tails it is safe to say they would have had them between their legs.

That very day the cavalry of Louie the Sun-King left the Chateau de St. Belmont. And never, as long as he lived, did the major escape that story. "Have you heard?" someone would ask. "He was disarmed by one of those rebel Belmonts. No, not the Count! His WIFE!"

So ends the tale of one lady amazon. However it is not the only instance of a female unsheathing her claws on the field of honor. From the black widow spider devouring her mate, to the she-grizzly charging to protect her cubs, the female is often more deadly than the male. Even in our own "gentle species" there have been certain lasses with atavistic yearnings toward the days primeval. They gave us the Valkyries and Amazons, and those lady-tigers who did battle in the Circus Maximus for the Romans. They also gave us tales like the following, which, had he only known, would have made the major tread lightly before any slight figure in outsize clothing.

It happened in the not-so-merry England of 1390, where the question of real estate was often settled, not by agents with quills, but by customers with sword-arms.

It was a question of this type that caused the head of a certain Hotot family to clash with one Ringsdale of the Dudley clan over the title to some land. The disagreement becoming violent, it was soon

a matter of combat at dawn and to hell with escrow!

Well, on that big day, the elder Hotot paid for celebrating his enemy's death the night before. He awoke with a crippling case of the gout. Though it meant his family's dishonor, Hotot could not make it to the rendezvous. He was in the act of sending a messenger to the Dudley clan, when his daughter, Agnes, a blond and buxom girl, pleaded for him to wait. She had a plan. It might not work; but anything was better than for a Hotot to avoid a fight for any reason less than death.

Then, unknown to her father, she struggled into his armor, helmet and all, and rode to the field. And she was just a little late. Ringsdale couldn't have waited on many of the fair sex, for this characteristic of the breed failed to make him suspicious. To him the armored knight cantering across the fields was that stubborn ass—Hotot.

Without pausing for the customary salutes, the two mailed figures leveled lances and charged. There was a flurry of hooves—a snap of iron on wood, and Ringsdale hit the dirt. As he lay there, his opponent rode to his side, laughing in an oddly melodious voice. Then, as he stared, the rider loosened the throatlatch and lifted the helmet in a mock salute. Ringsdale was a beaten man, when he saw that golden hair tumble down around the blue eyes. In more ways than one! He fell in love!

It's difficult to say just who won that duel, for Ringsdale soon solved their problems by changing her name to Dudley. To this day the family of Dudley has a unique crest on its coat-of-arms: a woman's head wearing a helmet with the throatlatch loosened. But, as befits a coat-of-arms, her face is much grimmer than the pretty one Ringsdale saw as he lay in the dust.

ONE of the toughest of the breed—and the prettiest, was a 17th century French woman, Mademoiselle Maupin. She was a very talented young lady. For she not only had sex-appeal, she had something even more lasting; death-appeal!

Like most beautiful women of the time, Maupin kept her stock up by picking her sponsors carefully. Her first was a natural: Serane, fencing master and lover. While Serane's protégée, she learned his complete bag of skill and tricks. In time she became expert with that entire lethal trinity: rapier, epee and saber. At that very time she also got tired of Serane. They parted after a duel in which she wounded him fatally.

With that affair behind her, Maupin proceeded to "wow 'em" in the theatre. Soon she was the most famous actress in France—beautiful, fragile and sweet. But what forty million Frenchmen didn't know was that she had a temper and a cave-girl disposition.. You see, she always had that lethal trinity of hers handy. Though she mixed with various gentlemen who had never heard of a corpse named Serane, Mademoiselle Maupin's rise to the summit of the duelling breed came at a masked ball in Paris. For it was there that she got in an unlady-like scuff with another woman over a young buck of the boulevards.

About half way through a minuet there was a loud series of slaps in prestissimo time and the orchestra ground to a stop.

Maupin's rival, her face reddened by the blows, left the floor in tears. Whereon three men of her group stepped up to Maupin and coolly asked her to leave the dance. She as coolly told them, "I'd be very glad to, messieurs, if you will go with me as far as the gardens." Well—they did.

It was quiet in the garden a few minutes later. Across the lawn the orchestra was striking into a lively number. Brilliant in a velvet sky, the moon looked serenely down. Its light gleamed off the blade in Mademoiselle Maupin's hand. From there it glanced to the faces of three dead men. She had killed them all—one by one! And she returned in time to finish the dance!

PERHAPS the most dashing female firebrand and more of our own, both in time and locality, was Lola Montez, the Spanish beauty whose portraits show her to have been strikingly like her namesake—Maria of Hollywood. Before she arrived in Grass Valley, California, in 1853, she had left a string of broken hearts from

Calcutta and London to Warsaw and Paris. One of those hearts belonged to the King of Bavaria. Another beat in the musical breast of Franz Liszt.

Her debut in the new world was by way of New Orleans. She left that throbbing town only when news of the gold in California electrified the country.

After settling in a cabin at the foot of the Sierra Nevadas, Lola made a valiant attempt to stay out of the limelight. For a time she actually succeeded in keeping to herself.

But one day Henley Shipley, editor of the Marysville *Herald* printed the story of her affair in Paris with a Frenchman who had been killed in a duel over her—one Dujarier. And a good yarn it was, too. For it was just after this Dujarier's death that she had startled all Europe with the bitter statement, "If only I could have fought in his place! I am better with pistols than Dujarier EVER was!"

It was bad enough, Lola felt, that the journalist used the story without checking with her. Or that he insinuated that she had been Dujarier's mistress, and that the dead man had left her 100,000 francs with which she had gallivanted through the capitals of Europe. Perhaps most of that was true. But he also made the mistake of using sarcasm in passing over her vaunted ability with pistols.

The next day Lola went to nearby Marysville in her surrey in a cloud of dust. In short order she found the scribe and challenged him to a duel with daggers, pistols or miner's pickaxes. When he turned pale and refused, she uncoiled a cowhide lash and proceeded to whip him down the entire length of the main street! A tigress equal to them all—Lola Montez!

Perhaps with all this evidence of death-appeal riding hand in hand with the appeal of sex, we can learn a lesson of caution when dealing with our own "sweet things."

Whether milady wants cocktails at five, or T-bones at eight, be careful. And remember the advice given a red-faced cavalry major over 200 years ago: "Pay heed to the request of a lady!"

Do that, brother! It may save your life!

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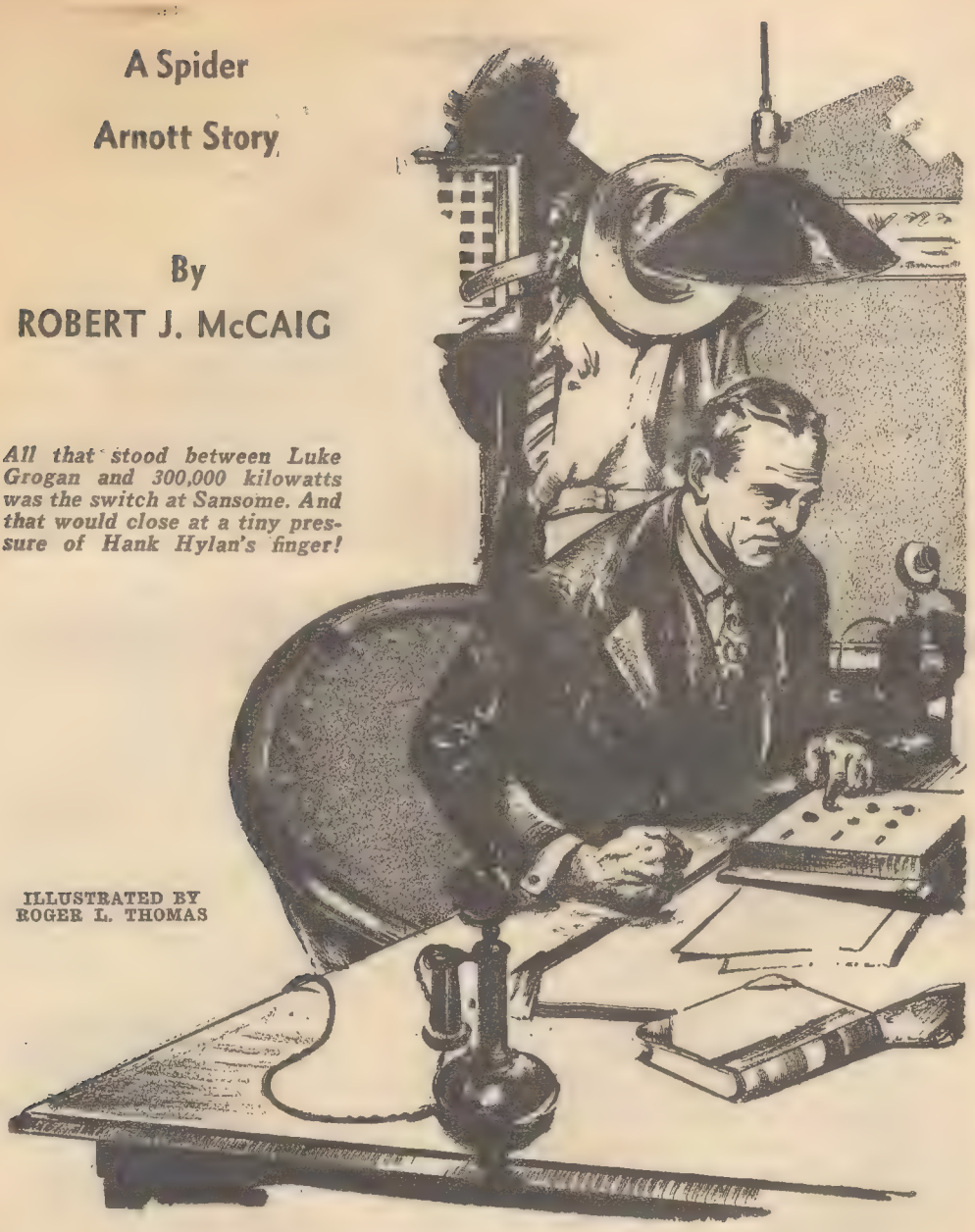
A Spider Arnott Story

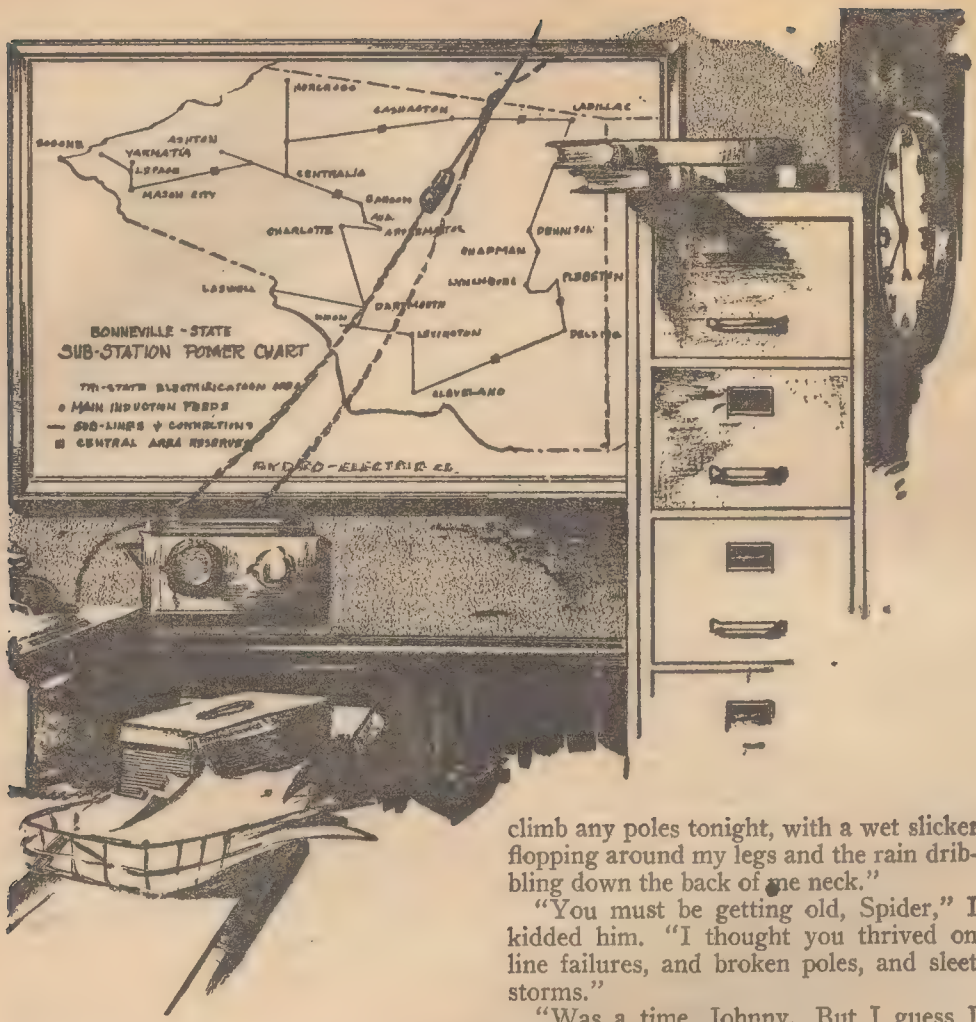
By ROBERT J. McCAIG

All that stood between Luke Grogan and 300,000 kilowatts was the switch at Sansome. And that would close at a tiny pressure of Hank Hylan's finger!



ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER L. THOMAS

GREEN LIGHT FOR GROGAN



RAIN slashed against the tall windows like thrown birdshot, and the wind mourned softly, sniffing at corners, thrumming the taut wires of the line deadends. But inside, the substation was warm and peaceful. Three of us sat relaxed, Frank Eager, the operator, was busy entering the hourly readings on the log sheet.

He finished, stuck his pen into its holder, and creaked his swivel chair around to face us. Lighting his frayed cigar for the tenth time, he observed around it, "You're still packing a horseshoe, Spider. No trouble yet, and the peak of the storm is past."

Spider Arnott grunted, tilted his ancient saloon chair back until its haywired legs groaned, and began building a cigarette. "That's just fine. I ain't hankering to climb any poles tonight, with a wet slicker flopping around my legs and the rain dribbling down the back of me neck."

"You must be getting old, Spider," I kidded him. "I thought you thrived on line failures, and broken poles, and sleet storms."

"Was a time, Johnny. But I guess I got my bellyful of it in the last forty years. Now I just as soon sit in a nice warm spot like this and see all the pretty red lights smiling bright on the switchboard."

"That's the way it should be, Spider," young Stan Orland chimed in. "Line failures and power outages are simply a sign someone has fallen down on the job."

The old troubleman looked at the kid, and a faint grin curled his lips. Stan didn't have to be down here tonight, even if it is the rule that each of Northern Hydro's cub engineers in Marston takes stand-by in turn. About all they can do in a case of trouble is to answer telephones, but they get the feel of urgency that marks a bad blowup, and a certain amount of the technique percolates. This Orland was a good kid, but kind of an eager beaver, which was why he was down

here tonight instead of waiting at home to be called if needed. And being only a year out of college, the theory of Stan's E.E. courses sometimes conflicted with the rough expediency of power operation.

Before Spider answered, he smoothed his quirly, whipped a match to it in cupped hands, and dragged in a lungful of smoke. "Well, kid," he said judiciously, "you ain't entirely wrong, nor yet exactly correct. In our business, you gotta take what the army calls a 'calculated risk.' If we beefed up the system to a point where it would take everything Old Lady Nature might toss at us, we'd be maintenance-broke. And in spite of that, some cock-eyed twist of luck would find a weak spot nobody ever dreamed of. Ain't no bunch of men can foresee every emergency."

"I don't agree, Spider. Some of your so-called 'old heads' are still thinking in terms of thirty years ago. They are past the age where they can think fast, so they fool around with emergencies, instead of taking quick action to restore service." Stan's voice held the unconscious cruelty of youth, and I looked for a rise out of Spider. But his weathered face was unconcerned.

"The fast move ain't always the right move, son. Those old boys has got something you ain't learned yet, but you will. To you, a loss of power means losing revenue dollars, or public relations, or Company prestige. But to them, continuity of service is part of their muscle and brain and soul. It ain't what a power outage does to a customer that counts with them, it's the fact that it *is* a power outage! They consider any break a personal insult. So they'll move heaven and earth and hell itself to get power back on the line, even if the customer just wants to toast a piece of bread or listen to Ma Perkins."

Orland was still skeptical. "That's a little far-fetched, Spider. Sure, the men work hard on storm jobs, but I'll bet it is the thought of those fat overtime checks that motivates them more than anything else."

Spider shook his head sadly. "I see you ain't been inoculated yet, son. Why, I tell you that keeping the power flowing on the lines is damn near as close to a religion as some of the boys has got. I even know a case where it saved a man's life."

Orland chuckled sarcastic. "I suppose the Mayor was on the operating table when all the lights went out, and the brave lineman crawled up into the hot circuits at the risk of his own life to get power back to the hospital."

"Damned if I didn't see that happen once, but this is another story. It concerns a guy called Hank Hylan, who wasn't a lineman at all."

THIS Hank Hylan (Spider began) was an operator at Sansome Switchyard, not ten miles east of here. It happened a few years ago, and now that I think of it, it could be that Hank saved his own life, as well as Luke Grogan's. But you can decide that for yourself.

You remember, Johnny, right after the war before the Argonaut plant was finished? Everything was loaded to the guards, and on top of that, we'd had to skimp on maintenance for five years. Now, with the Pool crying for power and more power, you couldn't get a line or generator out of service for love nor money. All over the Northwest things was at a critical point, hanging together pretty much by the grace of God. It got so if lightning hit a Bonneville substation, before the switches finished popping, half the rotaries at Union Metals here in Marston would be running wild, and that's six hundred miles away. I tell you, boys, it was tough.

Well, Sansome was a key point. Now they've moved the dispatchers up town and made white-collar dudes out of 'em, but then the operators at Sansome not only took care of the lines bringing power in from five big generating stations, but they h a n d l e d twelve outgoing transmission lines. On top of that they were the dispatchers for the whole northern end of the system, issued all clearances, and balanced load and river flow. Took a pretty high-class man to fill a shift at Sansome.

Which is just what Hank Hylan was. Kind of a quiet, mousy guy, never stand out in a crowd, but he had a mind like a bear trap and a memory like a calculating machine. Since then he's—but I better not say. I ain't using the right names here. Anyhow Hank was a topnotch man, fifteen years of service, well thought

of by everyone including the brass hats, and certain to be promoted in time. Then this thing comes up.

The boys out at Sansome made good money, lived in them eight-ten nice little Company houses out there rent-free, and most of 'em, like Hank, saved their dough. Hank, in his late thirties, was still single. He enjoyed his work, had a nice car, had all his life set in a smooth, comfortable groove. Until he met Margie.

This Margie was a good-lookin' babe, blonde and a little hard, but with big blue eyes that would melt a snowman. I dunno where Hank ever met up with her, but she musta done a little checking, recognized a good thing when she seen it, and dragged Opportunity in through the door before its knuckles could touch the panels. Hank being an innocent guy in spite of his brains, before he could get his bearings everything turned pink and Margie had him roped, hogtied, and mumbling "Yes" in front of a J.P.

We were all fond of Hank, but a bit dubious about this Margie. Nothing to do, though, but hope for the best. Well, they moved into one of the cute little houses at Sansome, and for a year or so it looked like she was going to cross us all up. She made him a pretty good wife, though a lot of Hank's pay and a chunk of what he had stashed went over the counters of Marston dress shops. But they seemed happy enough, and we kinda relaxed.

Then life at Sansome began to pall on Margie. I gotta admit it's pretty boring, especially in wintertime. Anyhow, she talked Hank into a car of her own, and you'd see her blizzard-head in various Marston cocktail bars with one or another of our local characters, when Hank was on afternoon or graveyard shift. But she watched her step fairly well, and apparently didn't get in too deep with her drinking pals. When she finally did go overboard, it was right on her home grounds.

They were getting well along with Argonaut at this time, and had started on the 154 Kv. line which would carry most of its hundred thousand new kilowatts into Sansome Switchyard, to pour into the hungry Power Pool. The line terminal at Sansome was almost a switchyard in itself, superstructure, switches, cable work, and controls. Among the crew Kearney sent out to build the superstructure was this boomer lineman, Luke Grogan.

THE GUY was big, handsome, as virile as a stud grizzly, and with a go-to-hell look in his eye. He was a crackajack lineman; but he came into Marston on the rods, with nothing in his keister but belt, hooks, and a pair of Kleins. He musta been too proud to admit he was broke, for when the men stopped for lunch the first day, he slid out and disappeared.

Hank Hylan was on afternoons, so he dropped down for a gander at the job. He spotted Grogan sitting in the sun, without no bucket, and insisted he come up to the house for lunch. Margie Hylan had hashed around beaneries long enough to become a pretty fair cook, and for Grogan she really loaded the table. Luke sized up her curvy figure and nice legs, liked the possibilities, and started planning a campaign before he finished his soup.

I kinda think Margie was fond of Hank, but Luke Grogan didn't give her no more chance than she had given Hank. Before the week was out, Margie was hitting the spots in Marston with Grogan, in her car and on Hank's dough. Grogan had her hypnotized so bad she hardly went through the motions of secrecy. She thought she knew her way around, but in this male-and-female game, Grogan was a big-leaguer.

In the next month, Margie was hardly ever home. Grogan, husky as he was, couldn't keep all them late hours from showing, but as far as the job went, he could still cut 'er. We didn't like what was going on, but men were scarce, so he stayed.

There was a lot of dynamite in the situation. But as far as the camp was concerned, the spark never reached the cap. Hank Hylan kept his worries to himself, but they were likely what made his stomach go haywire one night on graveyard, and he had to call out one of the other boys to finish his shift. He staggered up the hill to his house, sick as a dog, and found lights on, but no Margie. She had been there when he left.

Of course the guy couldn't sleep, so when Margie's car pulled into the drive

about three A.M., Hank was standing on the porch in bathrobe and slippers. But he told me afterwards he was so tired and sick and dopy he just couldn't call a showdown. Instead he went in the house and waited, cussing himself for a coward. Pretty soon he heard Grogan get out, say goodnight, and head for the warehouse we were using as a dormitory for the temporary construction crew. Margie slammed the car door and came into the house humming to herself.

Hank never said a word, not wanting to take it out on her when he had let Grogan go without jumping him. But Margie was a little high, and started giving out with the alibis. When Hank kept silent, she turned on the tears. She swore there was nothing serious between her and Grogan, but in the next breath she said she didn't care what people said, she would see him again. Then she ran into the bedroom and slammed the door in Hank's face.

As I told you, Hank wasn't no silly kid. He started to use his brains to think the thing through, and right away he come up against the certainty that while he couldn't excuse Margie's actions, he was nuts about the gal, and he couldn't imagine his life going on without her in it. But he also knew the road she would travel if she went Grogan's way, and he knew he couldn't let her get dragged through that. So in his hard logic, there was only one solution. Luke Grogan had to go.

Around the Hylan household, things were mighty quiet for the next week. Margie was cold and defiant, but for the time her meetings with Grogan seemed to be ended. But Hank figured it was only temporary, Margie had spilled enough to tell him how strong Grogan's spell was for her. So Hank just kept thinking about his plan, and finally he had it all worked out. All it needed was opportunity.

AND, as he knew it would, his chance came, about nine o'clock one wet, raw spring night. Hank was on shift when the Gold Run 100 Kv. line went out with a bang. Alarm bells rang, the switchboard jewels flashed from red to green as the big switches opened, and in the next thirty seconds the overloaded system literally busted apart like a house of cards. Working with other dispatchers as far south as Salt Lake and as far west as Portland, with phone, carrier and radio Hank helped patch it together again. In half an hour power was flowing again to the cities and towns and farms and factories of five states.

One indicator lamp on Hank's board still stayed green, the Gold Run line. He called Marston. "I've got a hunch it isn't far out, from the way it hit," he told the super. "How about getting a couple of the men from the construction crew with their truck? It will save an hour, and Spokane is crying to high heaven for Gold Run. They say they'll have to sag their frequency if it ain't back in service by midnight."

"Go to it," the super told him. Hank thumbed the ringer for the warehouse. He knew the crew would be playing cards around the heater. Someone answered, and Hank asked for Grogan.

"Here's your chance to pick up some double time, Grogan," he said, knowing the guy needed dough.

Grogan hemmed and hawed a bit, sounding worried. "How long do you think it will take?" he says finally.

"I don't think it was far out, probably an hour or so. Of course, you'll get a two hour minimum call on the payroll."

Grogan hesitated some more, but finally he says, "O.K., I'll get Bill to grunt for me and we'll head out. He knows the lines, and there oughta be enough repair material on the truck. Call you when we find the trouble."

I can imagine the cold gray of Hank's eyes when he hung up. Everything was going perfect. All he had to do now was set the trap and pull the trigger.

He got ready for a clearance. Both oil switches, at Gold Run and Sansome, had opened automatically on the trouble and again when the line tested bad. He told the Gold Run operator to open his line disconnects, and noted it on the log sheet when the man called back. Then Hank should have taken the long stick and gone out and opened his own set of disconnects and grounded the line, to make accidental closing of the circuit impossible. Instead, he just sat there and waited.

The buzzer on the Gold Run line burped Hank's call. It was Luke Grogan.

"Got it, Hylan, just out at Station Fourteen. Somebody shot an insulator string and the rain must have flashed it over. We got a spare and I'll change it out. Ready witn my clearance?"

"Here you go," Hank began, and I'll bet his voice was hard as granite. "Gold Run—Sansome No. 1 oil switch open, all three disconnects open and checked. Sansome No. 54 oil switch open, all three disconnects open and checked. Line grounding switch at Sansome closed. You do not need temporary ground this close to Sansome. Repeat it back, please."

Grogan did so, letter perfect.

"O.K., clearance to Grogan on the Gold Run—Sansome one hundred Kv. tie line," Hank said. Grogan repeated it and his portable clicked off.

Hank sat there, his eyes on the clock, one hand stretched out toward the switch button on the miniature board. The sands of Grogan's life were running out, for the Sansome disconnects were *not* open, and the line was *not* grounded. All that stood between Luke Grogan and three hundred thousand kilowatts of raving power at a hundred thousand volts, was the big, silent oil switch at Sansome. And that would close like an obedient robot at a tiny pressure of Hank Hylan's finger!

He watched the second-sweep of the clock. Now Grogan would be lowering the telephone set to his driver, now he was sinking his hooks into the pole and going higher into the driving rain. Now he was fastening his handline, and signalling the grunt to pull up the new insulator string. Now he was setting his tackle, now reaching over and loosening the wire clamp on the damaged string of insulators. Now—

Hank's mind was racing like a machine with a busted governor. He might get caught, though the log sheet would indicate that the clearance was never completed. At the inquest he could claim electrical failure or any one of a dozen alibis. But if anyone had overheard him issue the clearance on the phone line, he was a gone goose. But he found he didn't care. At least Margie and the world would be free of Luke Grogan, even if Hank wasn't around. She wasn't worth it, but—his hand reached again for the control.

He thought of the smashing, snarling power arc that would sear Grogan into oblivion, then the switches crashing open, the jangling bells and the flashing lights on a hundred switchboards. This light would go from green to red, and back to green again. He gritted his teeth, and his finger touched the surface of the control button. . .

When Dewey Blake relieved Hank at midnight, he says "Good Lord, Hank, what's the matter? You're pale as a ghost!"

"Something I et, maybe," Hank told him. He gave Dewey the system data. "Had some trouble on the Gold Run line earlier. Fixed now and back in service. It's on the log sheet—I gotta get home."

He came up the walk, feeling washed out and limp as a rag. Every light in the house was on. He walked in the door and found his arms full of a sobbing, clutching whirlwind—Margie, crying and laughing at the same time. Hank finally got her arms unwound from around his neck, kissed her, and led her over to the sofa. "Now calm down and tell me about it, kid," he ordered. She moved up closer to him.

"Oh, Hank, I'm a crazy fool. If you kick me out, I won't blame you. Only let me tell you the whole thing first." She poured out her story, how she and Grogan were to leave together that night, how she had left alone to wait for him in Marston and avoid suspicion in camp. They had tickets on the midnight train for the Coast, where Grogan said he had a good job lined up. Margie was to get a divorce, and Grogan would marry her.

In Marston, restless, uneasy, she had gone into a bar for a bracer. "I sat there, all by myself, and suddenly all the excitement went dead," she said hesitantly. "I don't know what happened, but all of a sudden I knew as clear as daylight I didn't want Luke Grogan, I didn't want to leave Sansome. All I wanted was a patient, homely lug named Hank Hylan."

Hank started to speak, but she put her hand over his lips. "I just stood up, left my drink sitting there, and tore out of the place. I drove the ten miles from Marston in nine minutes, and then I sat here a solid hour biting my nails, waiting for you to get off shift. Oh, Hank," she wails, "I'm an awful dope, but I love you!"

(Continued on page 128)

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

A LIBRARY for gun-lovers.

Query:—I would appreciate it very much if you would send me a list of books on firearms as far back as the matchlock gun up until you get to the modern guns of the Second World War, either American or foreign.

Would such books contain information on the "pepperbox"? If not, I would like you to answer my questions: What caliber bullet did this gun shoot? How did you load it? Did any have hammers or did they all have the inside firing pin? If possible would you please send me a diagram of the inside of a "pepperbox"?

I have some questions on the Colt .44 rimfire derringer. How far could it shoot accurately? Why was the centerfire better than the rimfire? The hammer on the one I have seen is hard to pull back—so how could the gamblers pull it out fast enough to shoot it before they were shot?

—Fred Pokrzywa
Johnstown, Penna.

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—I'll do my best for you; here goes:

From the following firm—Stoeger Arms Corp., 4517 Pearson Street, Long Island City, New York—you will be able to secure the following works on firearms (all good works in my opinion): "Big Game Rifles and Cartridges", Keith; "African Rifles and Cartridges", Taylor; "The Rifle", Truesdell; "The Rifle Book", O'Connor; "Guns and Gunning", Curtis; "Small Game and Varmint Rifles", Stebbins; "Rimfire Riflemen", Brown; "Practical Dope on the Big Bores", Ness, and "The Hunting Rifle", Whelan. The above are all on the rifle, of course.

"English Pistols and Revolvers", George; "Modern American Pistols and Revolvers," Gould; "N.R.A. Book of Small Arms", Volumes 1 and 2, Smith; "Hand Cannon to Automatic", Logan: "The Muzzleloading Rifle", Cline; "Firearms of the Confederacy", Fuller and Steuart; "A Treatise on the Rifle, Musket, Pistol and Fowling-piece", Bosworth; "Our Rifles," Sawyer; "The Rifle in America", Sharp; "Earliest Firearms", Clephan; "American Arms and Arms Maker", Gardiner; "English Guns and Rifles", George; and "The Kentucky Rifle", Dillon.

Pepper-box pistols were made in many calibers, most I have seen being .31 to .36. All were muzzleloaders, of course. I never saw but one having a concealed hammer. I am sorry to say I have no diagram of a pepperbox lock to copy.

The Colt Derringers I have seen were all .41 caliber rimfire, not .44, and I judge their effective range to be not over twenty-five yards; generally used at much shorter ones. The centerfire cartridges were generally a bit more powerful than the rimfire ones. Plenty of practice in drawing, cocking, and firing gave the gamblers their speed.

HINTS on how to prepare for a commission in the Air Force.

Query:—I am a youth of eighteen years, who has been putting myself through night high-school for the last several years. I feel that a "hot" war may be upon us in a very few years, so having an aversion to crawling on my stomach in the mud, I would like to prepare myself for a commissioned status in the United States Air Force. Now, what I want to ask you is what courses could I take at night college which would best prepare me for the aforementioned position. Better still, I would like to know if the Air Force has an R. O. T. C. which, if I qualified, would send me through college during the daytime at government expense. Also, where could I obtain some literature on the Air Force?

—J. Gordon Ebaugh
Baltimore, Maryland

Reply by O. B. Myers:—Herewith, I offer a few suggestions on how to prepare yourself for commissioned status in the U.S. Air Force.

Contact your local recruiting office for literature on the Air Force, either in person or by mail.

Write to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., and ask for the price list of publications on "Aviation." The list will be sent free; the various publications are inexpensive.

There is no Air Force program under which you could go through college at government expense. That was a wartime program, but is not in operation now.

The Air Force is always short of trained men in the field of radio communications and electronics. If you could acquire some training and experience, at night college or otherwise, you would at least have a start, although lacking a college degree you would probably have to enlist first and try for a commission from the ranks after further training in Air Force schools.

The better private schools offer specific, highly concentrated courses in these fields, many of them available by mail. I certainly hope you're wrong about the imminence of a "hot" war, but wish you good luck, anyway.

TRAINING for track.

Query:—Would you please give me a training schedule for track? Is there any way or are there any drills that will enable a slow man to increase his speed? I would greatly appreciate this information.

—William F. Coffey
Hickory, N. C.

Reply by Jackson Scholz:—A general training schedule for track would be difficult to submit inasmuch as there are numerous field events as well as numerous running events; all of which require entirely different training.

I assume you are interested in running, however, and I can assure you at the start that there is very little chance for a naturally slow man to increase his speed enough to be effective in competition, that is, in the races which require speed.

It is possible, however, that you possess an endurance which will compensate for speed in the longer races, the mile and over. You can determine this only by consistent effort, the results of which may not be apparent in the early stages of training.

A runner has to build himself up to the distances, a process which must be done gradually. If you are under eighteen years of age I would not suggest that you take distance running seriously for awhile. If you are over eighteen and physically mature you can start right in with light daily practice. By light practice I mean merely jogging, never to the point of exhaustion. Take it easy. Always stop while you have something left. You can gradually increase the distances and your speed as well, always remembering to stop short of actual fatigue. After three weeks or a month of such training you should be ready to turn on the steam. Try running a mile for time. If the time doesn't suit you, try two miles. Not on the same day, of course. It is well to wait at least five days before another all-out effort of that sort. If your time still seems slow, don't be discouraged. Some distance runners don't reach their peak until after months of training. Speed is born in a man. Endurance can be acquired, even though it often takes a lot of moral stamina to acquire it.

TAHITI, gem of the Pacific.

Query:—I would like to make a trip to the South Sea island of Tahiti, of French possessions. Please send me information and best possible route—also cost of trip.

—Avery S. Whitman
Bennington, Vermont

Reply by William McCreadie:—I regard Tahiti as the gem of the Pacific. Conditions as in all the South Sea islands, are very different from what they were before the last war. Communication was by Union S. S. Company or French M. M. Company for San Francisco before the war, and if you inquire at their San Francisco offices they will give you full details of trips and costs.

The French Government is very reluctant to have white settlers except artists and writers. All arrivals required to have sufficient means to pay the way for their stay, except maybe any just passing through. There are over 800 motors in Tahiti and a road runs right around the island, but accommodation is scarce and not very satisfactory. If you wish to settle and get permission you can lease land and build a shack. I think this covers chief details. The climate is pleasant and healthy and fruit and fish abundant. Cheerio.

A BIT OF GEOLOGY.

Query:—Several years ago I took the liberty of asking your advice with regard to mining procedure. Your reply was something to marvel at, in the sense that the time that you spent on three pages of closely typed information that was a short résumé of all the gold mining done in this country to date.

Since last contacting you I have done extensive research on the early Indian civilization of Southern Florida. Instead of going out west I have been detoured to the southern regions, partly through circumstances and partly through health. How-

ever, the time spent here has been a proving ground for research that can be applied to any locale.

I have a favor to ask of you again in the field of geology. Knowing nothing about this subject, will you kindly suggest approved reading on this subject that will give a little self-education. I am principally interested in silver and gold bearing formations.

—Charles T. Freude, Jr.
Hollis, N. Y.

Reply by Victor Shaw:—Geologically the rock formations favorable for veins and deposits of both gold and silver are also those in which other metallic ores are found, such as copper, lead, zinc, etc. And these favorable areas are right at (or near to) a contact between eruptive rocks like granite and andesite with a sedimentary type of rock. These are always "water-formed" originally, and include rocks like slate, schist, shale, and conglomerate known as "metamorphic" rocks. That is, their structure has been altered by volcanic heat and pressure from the original forms.

Note that the molten magma composing eruptive rocks contain all the metals mentioned in solution, which are cooled in the rock fractures where they emerge forming veins. Sedimentary rocks cannot be the source of these ore metals, being formed from silt, mud, and clays formed at the bottom of lakes, or any pools of water, and this includes all of the sands of beaches or former water basins, which by metamorphosis are altered into sandstone and, with greater heat and pressure, to quartzite.

You'll get all this in two books that cover this subject completely for prospectors. One is "Prospecting for Gold & Silver," by Eros M. Savage, price pre-war $2.50, now $3.00. The other is "Handbook for Prospectors," by M. W. von Bernewitz, price now $4.50. This as you can see by title covers all geology needed to find metallic ores, with all other data a prospector must know to be successful. Both of these are sold by McGraw-Hill Book Co; 330 West 42nd St., New York City, N. Y. Or I'm sure you can find them both in the N. Y. Public Library.

MIDGET DRIVERS.

Query—Am wondering if you can answer a few questions on midget auto racing. I have a story in mind to write about a young man who is a midget driver and find I know practically nothing about the subject and have never even seen a race. These are some questions which have come up:

1. Do drivers usually own the cars they drive, and what is the average cost of a car?
2. I understand there is room for only the driver in a car. Does a second rider ever ride (not in a race) and if so where would he be likely to be, (On the hood, etc.?)
3. Is there a racing association and where can I get their regulations and requirements, entry fees, etc.?

Any other information about midget cars, races and drivers would, of course, be helpful and if there are any books or periodicals on the subject I would like to know about them.

—B. L Wells,
Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Walt Woestman:—

1. Very seldom do the midget drivers own the cars. They usually drive for a percentage of the winnings, as in the big cars. The cost of a midget racing car will run from, perhaps, $2,000 for a Ford-powered car to $10,000 for one with an Offenhouser engine. These figures are for the better cars and some cars running in the smaller circuits may have been built for much lower prices.

2. You are correct in your assumption that there is only room for the driver, and very little room at that. In the most unlikely event that a mechanic was riding—certainly NOT in a race—it would be most likely that he would straddle the tail of the car. I hope that this is for purely fictional purposes!

3. Yes most decidedly there are midget racing associations. The foremost being the Contest Board of the American Automobile Ass'n, Pennsylvania Ave. at 17th St., Washington 6, D.C. Very closely following is the United Racing Ass'n, Atlantic Blvd. and Washington Ave., Los Angeles 26, Calif.

If you know nothing of midget racing I would suggest that you subscribe to one of the racing magazines such as *Speed Age*, P. O Box 237, Hyattsville, Md. or *The National Speed Sport News*, East Paterson, N. J.

NYMPHAEA ZANZIBARIENSIS.

Query:—I wish to secure seed of the wild Zanzibar water lily, *Nymphaea zanzibariensis*. I want several hundred for a test, and thereafter in lots of several thousand or in bulk. These are not available in the United States. Where can I get 'em? Do you know if these plants bloom over a considerable period or only during certain months? Do you know if there is a small water lily (other than the miniature Chinese white)? Prior to the war, a number of American sources supplied the Zanzibar lily seed.

—A. E. Kemmerling
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Reply by Gordon MacCreagh:—For your Zanzibar Nymphaea I would like to recommend the firm of Mohammed Ali Bros., George St., Zanzibar. I say, I would *like* to; for they are the most obliging and go-ahead people you can imagine. They will

procure for anybody anything from genuine Central African juju idols—that they make up in their own shop—to cheetah cubs—for which they pay the native boys four dollars, sell to dealer agents for thirty dollars, (the bandits), and then the American dealers, (honest toilers for a poor living), sell to chumps for *nine hundred dollars!*

Mohammed Ali's will get you Zanzibar lilies by the ton. But I have no wild guess as to how much they might charge. It could be that they've learned something about American prices from our wild animal dealers.

I would suggest, rather, that you write to the Curator, Botanical Gardens, Nairobi, Kenya Colony. While this would take a little more time till you can get a reply and make your deal, I'm sure you would be certain of getting exactly Nymphaea zanzibarensis and not a lot of water lilies.

I don't mean that the curator would sell to you direct; but he would negotiate arrangements and would see that you would not be robbed.

Water lilies? Yes, swamps full of them back of the coast in the foot hills. But I'm not botanist enough to know just what they are. The Curator would be the man to get in touch with.

And, by the way, if you do get any, will you send me a few seed or a root for my pool?

SUB-CHASERS of World War I and other warships.

Query:—In quest of information to refresh my memory and provide knowledge of a number of details which I lack, with the idea of using them in fiction, I am writing to you as "Ask Adventure" expert. I have been a reader of this magazine since Vol. I. No. 2, which is a longer time than I like to contemplate.

1. Can you give me the general dimensions of that type of sub-chaser of World War I known as the Eagle boat—and were all of them Ford built?

2. What was their draught and speed, and did they carry any armor at all?

3. My recollection of their armament was two 5 in. guns mounted 1 forward and 1 aft, with a dual purpose 75mm. mounted approximately amidships. Is this correct and was there any smaller regularly mounted armament, such as machine guns or 37mm? Please give me the approximate location of the gun mounts.

4. Was there a raised forecastle or was the deck flush from the house forward? Same query as to poop?

5. I was only on one for a short trip down a bay as a guest while she was manned by a Naval Reserve crew. My recollection is she was a single screw turbine driven (make of turbine). I remember there was a pressurized fireroom but not if there was one boiler or two? I recall the airlock to enter the fireroom was on the starboard side forward of the engine room. Could the boiler be adapted to blowers instead of pressurized room to avoid the danger of flareback if the pressure was suddenly killed? How heavy a projectile could her midship sideplates resist, say at 600 yards, and were the boilers entirely below the waterline?

6. Did this type of ship have only a foremast or also a main? I cannot recall.

7. On another subject, can you give me some details of the famous Dahlgren guns? When invented and first used and for how long in our Navy? Range, weight of projectiles and powder charge? I believe their calibers, at least on the monitors and some other ships were 11, 13 and 15 inch. Were any other calibers common? My recollection is that they were shaped much like a round flask, with an extremely thick breach in proportion to the bore. Were they all smoothbore muzzle loaders or were any subsequently modified by rifling or adapted to breach-loading (the latter hardly seems possible)? Were they ever used for broadside guns or only mounted as midship swivels or in turrets? Were round shot always used, solid or shell? Am I correct in believing that these guns thoroughly outshot the English Brooke rifles in the engagement between the Kearsarge and the Alabama, and what were the respective calibers of each?

8. Was the Columbiad ever used as a naval gun, and how did it differ from the Dahlgren?

Many thanks for your trouble.

—Horace L. Cook
Freestone, Calif.

Reply by Frank Herold:—The Eagle Boats had an overall length of 200' 9", extreme beam of 25' 9", mean draft of 6' 6", displaced 430 tons and were single screw, powered by a Poole geared turbine.

These vessels were equipped with two oil burning boilers which were not completely below the water line. The boiler of the Eagle Boat could not be adapted to blowers without pressurizing the fireroom. The smoke pipe would not provide sufficient draft and the air supply to the fireroom would be too restricted to permit steaming the boiler with natural draft except at extremely low firing rate. On the other hand, the boiler could be modified to steam without pressurizing the fireroom. This could be accomplished by building a false front or wind box on the boiler around the burners and discharging the air from the blowers through ducts into the wind box. However, such an arrangement would not be too efficient because furnace gases would seep through the casing joints into the fireroom since furnace pressure would be above atmospheric pressure. In order to remedy this situation it would be necessary to construct an air casing around the entire boiler.

They had one mainmast located amidships. Decks were flush forward and aft

of the deckhouse. The Eagle Boat had ten pound plates at her water line which could be pierced by a 20mm projectile at 600 yards.

All of the above data was furnished me by the Bureau of Ships, Navy Department. The data on the Dahlgren and Columbiad guns, the Brooke Rifle, the guns on the *Kearsarge* and the *Alabama*, and the armament and armor of the Eagle Boats was obtained from the Commanding Officer of the U. S. Naval Proving Ground, Dahlgren, Va. Coincidentally, I subscribe (via membership) to the U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings and the February, 1949 issue contained a very interesting article, and photos, in which the Dahlgren guns have a major role. I have cut those pages from my copy and am forwarding them herewith. Please note that the deaths of the Secretaries of State and Navy in the explosion aboard the U.S.S. *Princeton* in 1844 strongly motivated Dahlgren in his study and research of interior ballistics.

Dahlgren Gun. The design of the Dahlgren gun was first proposed by Lieutenant John Dahlgren, USN in 1850. Because of its shape this gun was familiarly known as "the soda water bottle" gun. The first model, completed in 1852, had a bore diameter of eleven inches and was designed to fire round shot, both solid and shell. The solid shot weighed 170 pounds, and the powder charge used weighed 15 pounds. The model gun blew up after firing 1,959 rounds.

In 1857 the USS *Plymouth*, under the supervision of Commander Dahlgren, made a successful cruise with 9 and 11 inch Dahlgren guns on board. During this cruise the Dahlgren guns were found to be as manageable and effective as other ordnance of less weight. Dahlgren guns were used by the Navy until about 1880. In 1880 the manufacture of the first hooped-steel, high powered rifled guns of the Navy began. Previous to this, all of the Navy's armament had been muzzle loaders of cast iron construction. In 1880 the 11 inch Dahlgren guns were used exclusively for pivot guns of first and second class corvettes, and it was this caliber that was later converted into 8 inch rifles.

No record can be found to the effect that Dahlgren guns were converted into breech loading guns. During the war between the States the following Dahlgren guns were used: 12 pounder, 20 pounder, 30 pounder and 50 pounder rifled guns; 12 pounder, 24 pounder, VIII, IX, XI and XV inch smooth bore guns. The turrets of most monitors carried XI and XV inch Dahlgren guns. Some Dahlgren guns were mounted as broadside guns and some as pivot guns. Approximate ranges for IX and XI inch Dahlgren guns are as indicated in the following table:

Gun Caliber	Gun Elevation	Charge Weight	Weight of Projectile (Shell)	Range in Yards
IX	1°	10 lbs.	72 lbs.	700
"	3°	"	"	1,100
"	6°	"	"	1,700
XI	1°	15 lbs.	135 lbs.	700
"	3°	"	"	1,100
"	5°	"	"	1,500

Brooke Rifle. The Brooke cast iron rifle was designed by Commander John M. Brooke of the Confederate Navy and was manufactured in Richmond, Virginia. From information obtained from the varied reports on the engagement between the ALABAMA and the KEARSARGE, the KEARSARGE outshot the ALABAMA consistently due to superior gunnery. The guns mounted on board the KEARSARGE and ALABAMA were as follows:

KEARSARGE

No. of Guns	Type
4	Short 32 pounders of 42 cwt.
1	28 pounder rifle
2	11 inch Dahlgren smooth bore pivot guns.

ALABAMA

No. of Guns	Type
6	Long 32 pounder broadside guns.
1	Rifled 100 pounder Blakely.
1	8 inch shell gun.

Columbiad Gun. The Columbiad was a heavy long chambered, muzzle loading gun, extremely thick behind the trunnions. It was designed to fire shot and shells at a high angle of elevation. Columbiads were used by the Confederate Navy. The Confederate States floating battery at New Orleans consisted of seventeen 8 inch and one 9 inch Columbiads.

Eagle Boats. The World War I Eagle Boats carried two 4 inch 50 caliber guns, one mounted forward of the bridge and one mounted aft on the deck house, one 3 inch 23 caliber gun mounted aft, two 30 caliber water cooled machine guns, and twelve depth charges. The Eagle Boats were not armored.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD PREECE, c/o *Adventure.*

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Auto Racing—WALT WOESTMAN, 2310 Midlothian Drive, Altadena, Calif.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Camping and Outdoor Cookery—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., S., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Fencing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

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SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

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United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C. c/o *Adventure*.

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Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, c/o *Adventure*.

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure*.

The French Foreign Legion—GEORGE C. APPELL, c/o *Adventure*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

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★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, 26 George St., Manly, N. S. W., Australia.

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ON SALE JUNE 9th

(Continued from page 10)

sees my name on my suitcase and holds up traffic telling me of one of my stories he has read . . . an airline officer in the U. S., ditto, and finds me place in a crowded plane . . . austere high brass in Army, Navy, State in Washington suddenly unbend in praise or criticism in warm friendliness . . . a distinguished Army officer aboard a trans-Atlantic liner finds me comfortably ensconced in second cabin informality and routs me out of slacks and into boiled shirt for most of the rest of the voyage in first cabin formality—another *Adventure* fan. Believe it or not, I've even seen the normal frostiness of a banker's eye melt into warmth for the same reason!

These incidents have all happened in the past six months and are rather remarkable, seeing that I have not appeared on *Adventure* pages for some fifteen years. Part of that enforced absence was due to the war and its aftermath. Having spent considerable time as a Regular Army officer attached to various foreign general staffs I felt that I could smell war coming long before it arrived. My efforts to aid the national defense resulted in three books and many magazine articles, speeches and radio broadcasts, pleading for modernization of the Army, unification of the armed services, better training of officers, competitive promotion instead of seniority, and a host of other things, most of which have since been adopted. I also warned in 1940 and again in 1941, right up to Pearl Harbor, of the certainty of a sneak attack by Japan, begging, among other things, that sufficient weapons from our overflowing arsenals be sent to the Filipinos, so that, at least, they could defend themselves. This was done, at long last, but too little and too late, for the ships carrying the stuff were en-route and were recalled on news of Pearl Harbor.

Being denied opportunity to command troops in battle abroad, I battled with a typewriter against the Colonel Blimps at home. Some of them actually tried to stop publication of my stuff, especially after I came out in *Look* magazine stating that our then tanks were more deadly to their crews than they were to the enemy. But the article helped toward getting better tanks and the badly needed tank destroyers. For the most part the writing involved financial sacrifice, especially the books and the many speeches and radio appearances. Between dodging the brickbats hurled by irate Colonel Blimps and bills presented by justly aggrieved grocers there was never a dull moment!

The pay-off was well worth it all, however. The Colonel Blimps have been confounded. The brass of today is keener. One of them, a general officer, generously announced that my efforts "had saved thousands of American lives" . . . which statement, while highly exaggerated, was as much balm to a battered spirit as a combat medal.

Latterly, I've spent much time abroad, studying Joe Stalin's boys, their methods and ambitions. This means that another book is in the works, its theme being that we'd better learn to play shrewder poker before Uncle Joe bluffs us out of the last pot. On the other side of the typewriter desk is the first draft of a novel, having to do with Genghis Khan, that other menace out of the East, who turned the world topsy-turvy in his day.

The novelette in this issue is in part from material of the novel. I hope that it will recall me to old friends among *Adventure* readers and introduce me to new ones, and that both will find something of interest in the yarn.

As to the historical background of the story, many Christians, including Crusader knights, are known to have served with the Mongols; Christians in Mongol conquered areas were given special privileges, and were "to be treated with honor and reverence." That the hard-pressed Crusaders desired Mongol aid against their common enemy, the Moslems, is a logical assumption; that the Mongols sought alliance with the Christians on several occasions is an historical fact, notably the embassy sent to the Pope and to Edward I of England. That Hulagu, grandson of Genghis Khan, actually allied himself with Haithon, king of the Christian Armenians, to undertake the recapture of Jerusalem, is also history. Had Europe heeded the many proffers of Mongol aid, it is very likely that the Holy Land could have been saved from the Moslems.

IN ROBERT McCAIG'S latest yarn about that doughty character, Spider Arnott—"Green Light for Grogan" (page 108)—he mentioned the "Northwest Power Pool," which aroused our curiosity. We asked him to elucidate and Bob came up with the following interesting information—

Take an area from central British Columbia to southern Utah, from the North Dakota line to the Pacific Ocean. Over its rolling prairies and towering mountains, along its wide rivers and high passes, throw a network of fourteen thousand miles of high voltage transmission line. Connect in a hundred and sixty hydroelectric and steam generating plants belonging to nine private companies and three government or municipal agencies, and you have the Northwest Power Pool. It provides practically all the power supply for five states and a Canadian province.

In the Pool, you don't talk about mere kilowatts—you'd run out of zeros. Its operations are recorded in megawatts—one million watts, thirteen hundred and forty horsepower apiece. The Pool isn't a business entity, it is a coordinated power operation in which all the companies and agencies

work together to meet the swelling power demands of the Northwest.

And so far, the Pool has met them, except for a few brief periods of extremely low water. But it isn't an easy job, for as recently as January third, the Pool had a peak of 4,736,000 kilowatts. With every available generator on the line, the frequency still sagged six-tenths of a cycle during the evening peak.

The operation of such an interconnected system is complex. It has to take into account such divergent factors as the snow depth on the Rimini slope and the Mountain-Pacific time differential; a rock slide at Chelan and a steel strike in Utah. Its dispatchers use telephone, teletype, carrier current and radio, and the Pool boasts automatic devices as intricate and quasi-human as ever developed.

With this tremendous load, involving heavy interchanges of power, a Pool "break-up" is an awesome and unpredictable thing. During peak periods, a line failure anywhere may knock the Pool apart like a house of cards. For instance, last September, lightning socked one of the Grand Coulee—Spokane 230 Kv. lines. Switches cascaded out from Seattle to Ft. Peck, from Billings to Portland. Within seconds, the Pool had become eight separate systems. In some places, the frequency soared and in others it sagged so low traffic signals and elevators refused to operate, and industrial plants bogged down. Coulee dropped 1285 megawatts, and brother, that's 1,715,000 horsepower!

At times like that, the dispatchers in the various sections of the Pool get a real workout. They isolate the faulted line, start getting switches closed in the right sequence, tie one or two of the systems together as a base. They build from that, and usually within an hour the Pool is humming along again in perfect harmony. It takes good judgment, quick thinking, and a camera memory—and these picked men have them.

The names in the Pool ring like the Catalogue of Ships—Malad, Thousand Springs, Horseshoe Bend, Battle Creek and St. Anthony, Mystic Lake and Rainbow, Ariel, Condit and Snoqualmie, Diablo, Gorge, Alder; LaGrande, Cazadero, Bull Run and Bonnerville, Alouette and Stave. From them came the power that ended in a blinding flare over Hiroshima, from them comes the light that glows in the window of a remote Montana ranch house. Is it any wonder that Spider Arnott has a thousand tales to tell?

JACK McLARN makes his bow as an *Adventure* contributor with his railroading story, "Big Hook"—and reveals that he was . . .

. . . born Birmingham, Ala., July 13, 1903. Grammar, High School, Business College. First job with Southern Railway 1918, messenger, telegrapher, clerk, stenographer, business car secretary to a gang of officials (one at a time) for better than too many years, last assignment Chief Motive Power Clerk, Charlotte, N. C. There yet. Have sold a good many yarns since I started writing, back in the thirties—but this story, "Big Hook" is my first *Adventure* offering. Specializing now, railroad and action stuff, with occasional detours into the problem field. Married, one daughter. Family tolerantly amused at the old man's typewriter-pounding, except when it louses up a Canasta game.

Hobbies? Music, *Music, MUSIC!* Kicked a fiddle around since the sixth grade, acquired a trombone in High School, sax later along the road. Early twenties, around Cincinnati, playing for unshelled peanuts in the highway night spots, better dough for long-hair stuff in the plushier joints up the valley—and strictly for kicks in the back rooms of the dives around Central Avenue where other displaced Southerners ganged up after hours and soothed their somesickness with authentic Dixieland gutbucket until they swept us out with the sawdust. Where'd I have the most fun? Naturally . . .

Things I remember best? The hard-bitten crew of rail-men who taught me what little I know. The soft wail of a chime whistle on a distant steam locomotive, the voice of a vanishing era. The cocky, sneering, horn-like squawk of a diesel. The shimmering heat that rises up from the sun-baked ballast, the soft, slurring voices of black men on a rail gang in the Deep South . . . their singing. . . The paper-thin, bitter-sweet voice of a muted trumpet in the thick dimness of a cellar speakeasy. The throaty laugh—or was it a sob?— of the woman in the last booth, just before the acid seared her throat. The ghostly off-key harmony of the old *Island Queen's* calliope as the now dead Great Lady side-wheeled her dignified way up-river to Coney. Some things take a lot of remembering—and a lot of forgetting . . .

A FEW documentary notes from Perry Adams about his unusual story "The Coward," in this issue—

My story in this issue is based on actual fact, given me by an old friend in R.A.F. Intelligence. Of course, in the story I have made of his outline, our immediate concern is to discover whether, after that fatal coasting accident in Switzerland, the character Noon ever got his nerve back.

In real life, obviously the ending of my story was only the beginning of Noon's adventure. His ship *was* captured, exactly according to the British Navy plan, while Noon carried out his scheme of escaping undetected from the sealed up hold, when the Nazis docked their prize in a French Channel port, then part of the Nazi conquest.

Noon carried out the immediate objective

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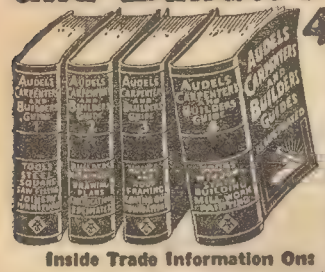

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of his mission, which as you will recall, was to gather and transmit to England certain critical data needed for the impending invasion of France by the Allies under General Eisenhower. Noon never got home. He simply disappeared, and to this day the presumption is that he must have been captured and shot as a spy.

This, you may agree, would have been one hell of a way for my story about him to end. Instead, I like to think of him as still living—a legendary figure performing incredible feats, not because he was brave, but because he was man enough to face up to his job despite almost uncontrollable fear.

SOMETIMES even authors like each other's work! In the April issue we ran two novelettes, one by Colonel R. G. Emery and the other by Major Franklin Davis. Author Emery enjoyed Author Davis' story ("The Road to Liebesdorf") so much that he sent us a letter to forward to him. We thought you might like to look in on their exchange of correspondence—and herewith reproduce it (with permission). Emery to Davis:

I can count on the fingers of one hand—with some to spare—the times which I've felt impelled to compliment the competition. But I've just finished reading your piece in the April *Adventure* and I'd like to say that I think it the best description of an actual bit of action I've seen coming out of World War II.

As has been noted before, the writers don't see action and the soldiers can't write. It is an enjoyable experience to read something by someone who is both.

So far as the writing is concerned, my comment is on the same critical basis as that of the old lady from Oshkosh who didn't know anything about art but knew what she liked. But, as to the other, I was with the Infantry of the Third Army from Bastogne to Echternach and I speak from uncomfortable experience. Your little scrap was so reminiscent it hurt.

AND Davis to Emery:

Thank you very much for your exceedingly kind letter which reached me today through *Adventure*. Considering your position as both a soldier and a writer, I know I couldn't ask for a higher accolade.

I got quite a chuckle out of your reference to the competition. Anyone who can turn out a piece with the polish, authenticity, and compelling interest of "Brother Bar Sinister" will never have any competition from me.

(Continued on page 126)

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(Continued from page 124)

But it was interesting to compare the two pieces from a military viewpoint. It's apparent that we agree that the personal element in battle—determination, audacity, fortitude and the intangibles of leadership—make the difference in combat. I'm certain this will hold true if we are ever faced with another war—push-buttons, H- bombs or not—just as it was true at Bastogne and Echternach, or, for that matter, at the siege of St. Vanne or Liebesdorf.

AND finally, we'll wind up the *Camp-Fire* session for this month with the announcement of a very welcome addition to our "Ask Adventure" staff—George C. Appell, who will replace the late Georges Surdez as our expert on the Foreign Legion.

Mr. Appell first met the Legion in North Africa when the U. S. Army was poised there between the desert campaigns of 1942-43 and the invasion of Sicily. As an infantry officer, Appell found attached to his command a company of Goumies—the Sultan of Morocco's Household Troops—whose hobby was the removal of enemy ears as souvenirs to be sent home. The Goumies, with elements of the Legion, kept down local Arab thefts and nocturnal disturbances during the Allied wait; and when Sicily was pierced from the south, both Goumies and Legionnaires went along. Wounded toward the end of the Sicilian campaign, Appell was invalided back to North Africa and during the subsequent months in various hospitals met again several of the Legionnaires who had been known to him before and with whom he had emptied many a bottle and burned down many a candle.

Later, during the last years of the War, Appell was stationed in Asia with the Chinese Combat Command, having arrived there by way of India; and it was in Yunnan, China's southernmost province, that he had an opportunity to see the border fighting in the Chin hills where the Legion and the Tonk irregulars shot it out daily for a few square hectares of terrain. (They still are.) Since leaving the Army in 1946, Appell has devoted all of his time to military research and the production of fiction. His first novel, "The Tin Trumpet of China," having to do with the Chinese Nationalist Army, will be published by Duell, Sloane and Pearce this fall.—K.W.G.

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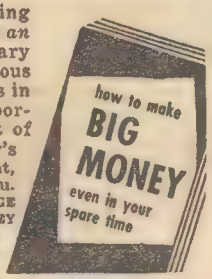

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(Continued from page 103)

away—killed six and hurt some more. In the meantime Captain Anderson was hit."

"What a pity. He was the youngest captain in the Army, certainly one of the most promising, a man with a high regard for duty and discipline."

"Yes, sir," said Sergeant Owens.

"You've done well, as always, Sergeant. I'll send an officer down temporarily."

Owens saluted stiffly. "Yes, sir." He turned just as Moran came up.

"Dammit!" exploded the little soldier. "It wasn't that way. If you hadn't done what you did, we'd all be killed. Why did you talk like that!"

Sergeant Owens took the reins of his mount. "As the captain once remarked," he said softly, "duty is a fine sounding word . . . We'll groom the horses now."

THE END

GREEN LIGHT FOR GROGAN

(Continued from page 113)

SPIDER ARNOTT brought the front legs of his chair down with a bang and stood up. He stretched lazily. "So that's the end of the story. Hank and Margie ain't at Sansome any more, but I seen 'em the other day, and they looked as happy as pigeons. They got two cute kids now."

Young Orland was puzzled. "But what happened? Didn't Hylan close the switch?"

Spider grinned. "Naw, thought better of it. Grogan finished the repair job, turned in his clearance, and Hank hotted up the line with nobody the wiser. Grogan moved on shortly after that, he was a boomer anyhow."

"Well, it was a good thing for him Hylan's conscience took over in time," the kid observed sagely. "But it would be pretty hard to deliberately electrocute a man, like that."

"Conscience, hell!" Spider roared. "Son, you missed the whole point of my story. Hank Hylan didn't give a hoot about knocking off Luke Grogan, no more than swatting a fly. But when it come to busting up the power system of the whole Northwest for the second time that night, that was something else. Hank just couldn't bring hisself to do it!"

THE END

(Continued from page 91)

shadows were huge and erratic against the piled crates and bales.

A voice at my elbow said, "I suppose you'll be a bit surprised to see me again so soon."

Noon, of course.

"You're Onnam," I said stupidly. Jarman Noon—the last syllable of the first name, the first two letters of the second—M-a-n-n-o. Backward, Onnam. For some reason, the derivation of his *nom de guerre* was suddenly plain to me.

"I wish my mother could know," he said. "Naturally, that can't be." He gave the dungarees he was wearing a sort of hitch and took a deep breath. "My girl knew, though. Else knew. From the beginning. I got into this with the idea that it might take me to Germany—so that I'd keep in touch with her. Yes, Else knew, and the Nazis found out she knew. They wanted her to betray me. They tortured her till they killed her."

For the second time that day I was at a loss for words to say to him. Instead, I caught myself staring down into that filthy coffin at our feet, symbol of matchless courage.

"You got your nerve back," I said at length. "Got it back in overflowing measure. I'm eternally glad of that."

"There's the supreme irony," he said. "What happened in Switzerland made a coward out of me—and I've never changed."

"But you've proved—fifty times over—"

"I'm a rotten coward," he insisted. "It's only what they did to Else has filled me with a rage stronger than fear."

THE END

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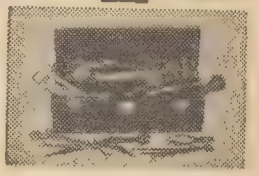

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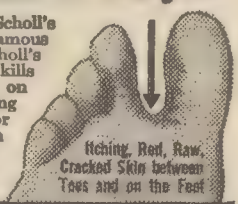

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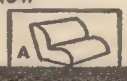

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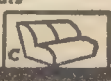

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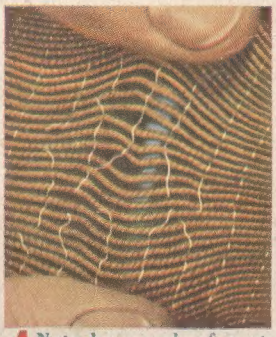
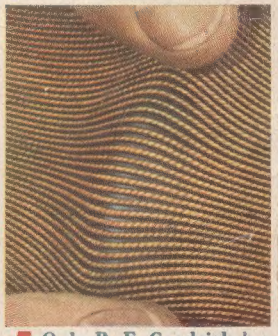


4 Note how cords of most tires are bunched and gapped by slender cross-threads. Result: weak spots, "slacker" cords, overworked cords. BFG cords, instead, are sealed in rubber, with uniform spacing and tension.



5 Only B. F. Goodrich has the equipment and skills to give you "rythmic-flexing cords" in every tire for every need. Buy today. See your B. F. Goodrich dealer. The B. F. Goodrich Company, Akron, O.

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